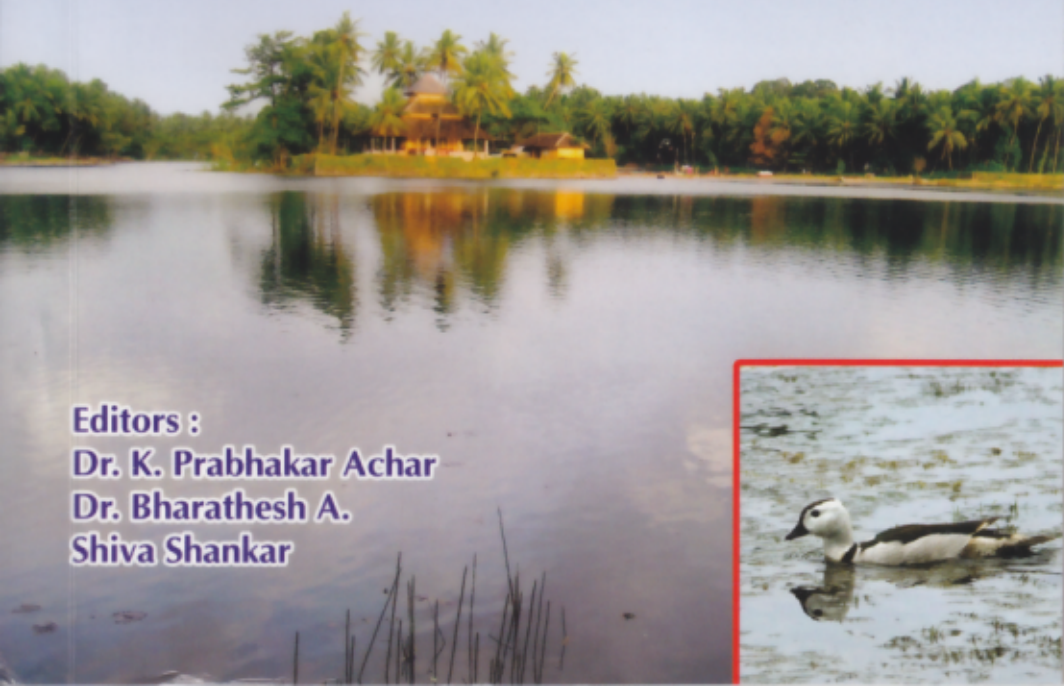
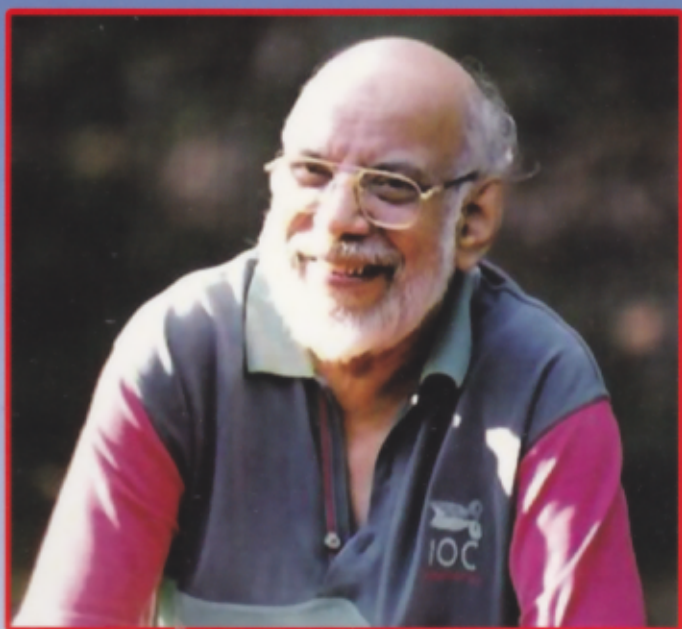


Memories of S. A. Hussain



Editors :
Dr. K. Prabhakar Achar
Dr. Bharathesh A.
Shiva Shankar





Book release on Inland Wetlands of India



Himalayan Bird Count ceremony



S. A. Hussain with ornithologists

MEMORIES OF S. A. HUSSAIN

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Published by

S. A. HUSSAIN MEMORIAL TRUST

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Editorial Note

The human life is a continuous journey, and the '*Complete Life*' is believed to have two parts. The first part is the life spent on the earth and the second part is the life in the subtle world, i.e., the life after death. Our beloved Hussain saheb has just begun his second part of his life. When we connect with our spiritual selves, we acknowledge the deeper reality of the universe and can convert information into wisdom. We dedicate this issue to S. A. Hussain, with whom we had the great privilege to be associated for a long time.

S. A. Hussain has been one of the highly knowledgeable birders of our country. He loved birds and wildlife throughout his life. His achievements were quite remarkable. The composite picture that emerges from his affiliations reveals the multidimensional facets of his unique personality. He had dedicated his life time for nurturing the nature lovers in general and the students in particular, for the promotion of nature conservation. We feel a sense of nostalgia for his commitment on the conservation issues, particularly relating to the splendid Anekere pond, which was dearest to his heart and soul. Despite his health hazards and discomforts, he never declined any invitation for a lecture, or a presentation or nature trails, from any organization. That was the kind of commitment he owed to the society as well as to the student community.

We tried our best to get funds for the newly created '**S. A. Hussain Memorial Trust**' and material contributions for this souvenir from S. A. Hussain's ornithological colleagues, his relatives and friends; but, the response to our request was not encouraging. Nevertheless, we are very much grateful to those who have made munificent contributions, both monetary and material, but for which this publication was not possible.

The title '**Memories of S. A. Hussain**' is presented in two parts: Part one deals with '*Reminiscences of S. A. Hussain*', that includes 17 articles and part two - '*Glimpses of S. A. Hussain*' - that consists of materials from '*Hussain's blog*' and '*Mangalorean.com*'.

We are thankful to M/s. Praveena Mudrana, Karkala, for the nice production of this reminiscent publication.

Dr. K. Prabhakar Achar

Dr. Bharathesh A.

Shiva Shankar

S. A. HUSSAIN MEMORIAL TRUST

C/o Sri Bhuvanendra College

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(From 'Hussain's blog': Selected articles & 'Mangalorean.com')

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PART I :

REMINISCENCES OF S. A. HUSSAIN

1. S. A. Hussain: A long-time friendship

Dr. K. Prabhakar Achar

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S. A. Hussain entered the second inning of my life rather accidentally through one of my articles titled: '*Anekere and Dream of a Bird Sanctuary*', that appeared in the leading Kannada daily '*Udayavani*' (May 19, 1994), which he read while he was in Dubai on a tour. The article was mainly about the memorandum submitted to the then Chief Minister of Karnataka (and also the MLA of Karkala), Sri M. Veerappa Moily, urging him to do the needful to declare *Anekere* as a Bird Sanctuary.

Bhuvanendra Nature Club-India, an institution based Nature Club of Sri Bhuvanendra College, Karkala, registered with the World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India), has been studying the avifauna of *Anekere* since 1990. It had published a booklet on '*Birds of Karkala*', in which 25 species of water and wader birds inhabiting the *Anekere* were listed. I had established this Nature Club in 1990, when I was a Professor of Zoology at Sri Bhuvanendra College, mainly to impart outdoor education to the students by organizing Birdwatching and Nature Orientation Camps.

To my surprise, I received a lengthy letter from S. A. Hussain on June 8, 1994; the excerpt of it is as follows: "I had the privilege of reading your article on *Anekere*. I was delighted to read the contents and your appeal to the local authorities to preserve *Anekere*'s ecology, particularly its birds. Your article prompted me to write a letter to the editor of the daily (*Udayavani*) in support of your views. I have sent the original by fax to the newspaper editor and a copy of the same has been enclosed for your information".

"Being the youngest in a family of ten children, I was always left out of the excitement of fun and games that my elder siblings indulged in, and often found myself alone. However, to my good fortune, a small lake

(*Aanekere*) across the road from my house provided the perfect refuge where I amused myself in the company of small fish, frogs, water lilies and of course birds. This early imprinting has helped me a great deal in enhancing my interest and conservation of nature and natural habitats. And wetlands have a special place in my priorities. It has helped a great deal in shaping my career and today I consider myself fortunate to be in the position I am in. Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB) has mandated under the Ramsar convention and the UNEP, to work for preservation and sustainable utilization of wetlands and their resources throughout Asia-Pacific”.

“Now I feel I should do something to preserve a wetland which had been my nursery and though my current position does not allow enough to do anything personally (I wish I could come back and retire there!), can definitely assist in some other way. I would be most happy to provide a preliminary financial assistance up to Rs.12,000 to enable your Bhuvanendra Nature Club to gather baseline information over the period of three months

The excerpt of the letter faxed to the editor (of Udayavani) by S.A. Hussain is as follows:

Dear Sir,

“I was delighted to read in your issue an article on *Aanekere* wetland by Dr. K. Prabhakar Achar. Having spent the best part of my childhood and youth on the banks of *Aanekere*, absorbing the wetland lore of the area, I was thrilled to see that my fellow citizens have taken up the matter of the conservation of this special wetland. I fully support the sentiments expressed by Dr. Achar and his colleagues and I owe it to my other good friend and academic, Dr. N. A. Madhyastha of Udupi, who has been in the forefront of the nature conservation movement in Dakshina Kannada”.

“In the best of time the tank used to have the finest examples of aquatic flora and fauna and a rich biodiversity value. Some of the useful species of food value, such as murrel and fresh water eel were abundant. Not long ago, large number of fresh water eels migrated downstream into the sea to breed and at the onset of the monsoon the young ones swam upstream through the river into the pond at the opportune period. Ever since the permanent dam was built this phenomenon of (*catadromous*) migration seems to have completely disappeared. Weed infestation, especially the most dreaded aquatic weed, *Salvinia molesta*, has severely affected plant diversity of the wetland”.

“Apart from the excellent possibility of being an important bird refuge, *Aanekere* also performs very important other functions. Perpetual presence of water in the tank has ensured that water for paddy cultivation as well as recharging well water for domestic use is available throughout the year. This has been a blessing for the town ever since the tank was established long ago”.

“However, in recent years, due to siltation which was caused partly due to the neglect and partly due to building a dam at the outflow point, water retention in the tank has been drastically reduced with the result that the tank dries up completely in summer. This has resulted in significant changes to the ecological character of the wetland”.

“What is urgently required is an immediate assessment of the current status of the ecological character of the wetland and adequate measures to restore its original character. Inventories of the flora and fauna and their ecological and economical values as well as ways means for sustainable utilization of these resources need to be undertaken. Once the essential elements of the wetland are assessed and looked after properly, other usages such as sustainable resource utilization, recreation and management can be instituted”.

“Echoing the sentiments of our colleagues, I would strongly urge the authorities not to get carried away by their zeal to convert the *Aanekere* into a mere pond for ‘boating’ but to pay attention to its ecological and long term economic values as well as educational tool for nature appreciation among common public. Boating, if at all necessary, can be confined to a much larger neighbouring wetland, *Ramasamudra*, which can be used for recreational purposes”.

I was really taken by surprise when the celebrated ornithologist and naturalist friend S. A. Hussain walked into my chamber (Zoology Department) on November 28, 1994, without any prior indication. My first meeting with him was during late 1950s as a class-mate in the local Board High School (now the Government Junior College) and later in early 1960s, when we studied together at Sri Bhuvanendra College, Karkala. Since then we had no contact for over three decades. It is the destiny, and perhaps also our commitment to conserve the bioresources of wetlands must have rejoined us. On that day we discussed many issues of mutual interest and *Aanekere* in

particular, because it was dearest to his heart. As a mark of his gratitude towards his Alma Mater, he gifted a useful title – '*A Field Guide to the Water Birds of Asia*' – to the college library.

After graduation, Hussain went to Bombay and began his career in the famed Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), as Research Assistant (1969-70) in '*Bird Migration Project*'. Soon he became the Senior Research Assistant in the Ornithology Division of BNHS, and continued in the same position for 9 years (1970-79). Steadily climbing the ladder of success, Hussain became the Assistant Curator (1979), Project Scientist (1980-85), Senior Scientist (1985-90) and the Deputy Director (Research) of BNHS (1990-92). In 1992, he left BNHS and migrated to Malaysia to take up the coveted assignment as the Director (Development) of Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB), at the Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. In January 1995, the Vice-Chancellor of University of Malaya awarded him the Research Associateship at the Science Faculty of University of Malaya.

Hussain's circle of friends include the world renowned ornithologist and the life time associate of Dr. Salim Ali, Dr. Sidney Dillon Ripley, the moving force behind the Smithsonian Institute; Robert Bateson, the famed wildlife artist and a score of other Americans of global stature and fame. Hussain had many Indian Naturalist followers as well. His unassuming and simplistic approach and friendly disposition had carved a special niche for himself in the national and international circle.

To commemorate the Dr. Salim Ali's Birth Centenary, BNHS organized '*Salim Ali Centenary Seminar on Conservation of Avifauna of Wetlands and Grasslands*' at Indira Gandhi Institute for Development and Research, Goregaon, Bombay, during February 12-15, 1996. I had the privilege and good fortune of meeting S. A. Hussain at the venue of the International Seminar, where I had also presented a paper titled '*Conservation of Biodiversity of Aneekere in Karnataka, India – A Preliminary Study*'.

My academic association with S. A. Hussain began only after his return from Malaysia in 1995. Soon after his return, I wrote another article titled: '*Ornithologist S. A. Hussain's Project – Aneekere Bird Sanctuary*' which was published in the leading Kannada Weekly Magazine – '*Taranga*' (on July 30, 1995). In fact, this article gave an insight into S.A. Hussain's academic and research achievements, as a renowned ornithologist and field biologist, to the people of Karnataka; and also dealt about his action plan for the

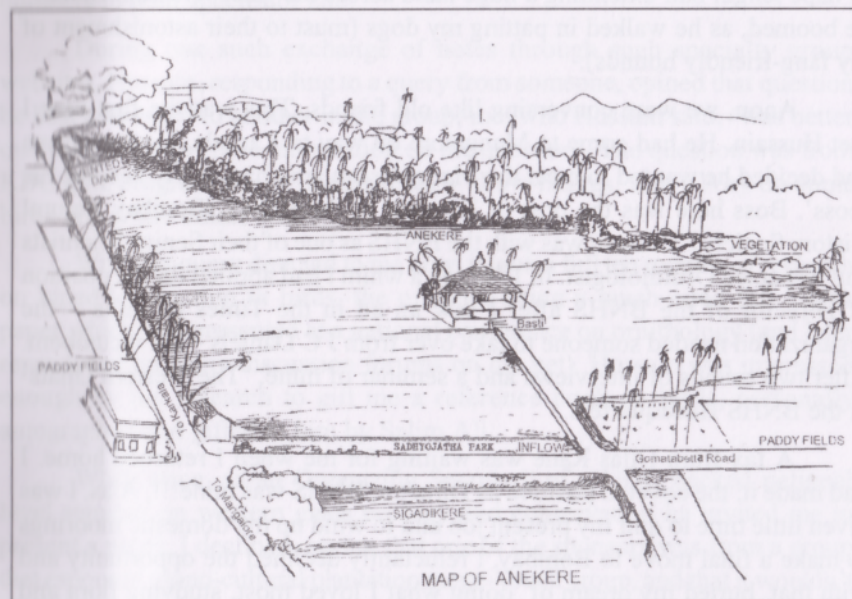
development of Aneekere as a bird sanctuary. He was closely associated with all the major activities of the Bhuvanendra Nature Club. As a part of the 42nd Wildlife Week Celebrations, we organized '*Salim Ali Birth Centenary Seminar on Conservation of Wetlands*' on October 6, 1996. To commemorate the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence, a state level '*Western Ghats Biodiversity Conference-97*' was jointly organized by the Bhuvanendra Nature Club and the Biodiversity Initiative Trust of S. A. Hussain, with a financial grant from the UGC. The proceedings of this conference was published later in December 1999 with a citation - '*Biodiversity of Western Ghats Complex of Karnataka: Resource Potential and Sustainable Utilization*' - with a financial grant secured by S. A. Hussain through his friend, David Ferguson, of United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington D.C., USA. '*A Field Guide to the Birds of Dakshina Kannada*' was a Decennial Publication of Bhuvanendra Nature Club – India, which was released on January 18, 2000, by Padmabhushana awardee Prof. Madhav Gadgil, a biologist and ecologist of international repute, from Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. The publication of this field guide was made possible by the support of S. A. Hussain, who not only generously volunteered his time and expertise, but also secured the financial grant from '*The Taiwan Wildbird International Centre*' Taiwan, through his friends Mr. Wu Sen-Shyong and Ms. Yanghsiou-Ying. This was the first comprehensive field guide on the rich avifauna of Dakshina Kannada, and one of my talented B.Sc. students, K. Geetha Nayak, co-authored the title with me. All the illustrations were drawn by another B.Com. student, Sheik Irfan Kuntalpaday. S. A. Hussain was the motivating force behind this project and this book was written under his guidance. Subsequently, he also played a significant role in shaping the destiny of Geetha Nayak, who after getting her doctoral degree from Pondicherry University under the guidance of Dr. Priya Davidar, left for UK for her post-doctoral research.

After my retirement as Professor of Zoology in 2001, I was quite fortunate to be absorbed as Research Associate (2001-05) at the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, in a biodiversity project of the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), Government of India. I also got an opportunity to associate myself with the various research projects of Prof. Madhav Gadgil. One such project was the preparation of the '*Karnataka State of Environment Report and Action Plan*'. As a member of the Biodiversity sector team headed by Prof. Madhav Gadgil, I was entrusted Udupi, Madikeri and Chikmagalore districts to organize separate workshops

on 'Karnataka State of environment and Action Plan'. S. A. Hussain joined me at my request and helped me in the conduct of workshops during January 2003, and in this regard we traveled together and also stayed together in Government Guest Houses. I got ample opportunities for interaction during this period. This project was aimed at addressing the problems relating to conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits of its rich heritage of biodiversity resources. This project, undertaken by the Department of Forest, Ecology and Environment, Government of Karnataka, was supported by the World Bank.

Syed Abdulla Hussain had a multidimensional personality. He hailed from a reputed royal family and lived in a palatial mansion situated very close to *Anekere*. His father, Haji Syed Hussain Saheb, was a leading Lawyer of the time and also the local MLA in the erstwhile Madras Presidency. After his return from Malaysia, S. A. Hussain was a frequent welcome visitor to my house. He was very fond of 'Pathrode', a traditional local delicacy prepared from the *colocasia* leaves. He also enjoyed other vegetarian dishes, and never failed to record his appreciation to my wife, about the preparation. Being a protégé of legendary birdman, Dr. Salim Ali, he imbibed many of his fine qualities. He had a great sense of humour and quite often witty in his remarks. He had excellent communication skill, both oral and written. His command over English language was remarkable and hence he was a good writer and editor. But, he seldom made use of his writing skills and also failed to write books like his 'guru' Salim Ali. S. A. Hussain once recalled with me: 'I think my most memorable moments were during the 1972 Bhuthan expedition with Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley. I was to help Salim Ali. Not only was I allowed to use his gun, but also his Leica and cine cameras! The ultimate moment came when he actually allowed me to share the only room available at the remote Border Roads Organization Guest House.' He had also his drawbacks. Those who had closely associated with him must have had some bitter experience as well. He was short tempered and at times very explosive in his attitude and quite often passed sarcastic remarks caring little for others' feelings, in spite of cordial relationship. Because of this negative trait, he was disliked in some academic and friends' circles. I had deep affection and highest admiration and respects for S. A. Hussain, although our temperaments and beliefs and outlook on life seem diametrically different.

Birding with S. A. Hussain was most fascinating as well as quite educative. He had a sharp vision and acute hearing, and a remarkable ability to identify a bird even from a distance or mere by its call. S. A. Hussain loved young people, particularly school going children and he used to enjoy their company during his nature trails and birdwatching camps. While discussing about health, once he told me that he had the heart problem right from his birth. Although he was handsome and had attractive personality, he remained a 'chronic' bachelor, in spite of many opportunities to get married. Perhaps, he knew well about his congenital cardiac ailments, so he never wanted to risk his partner in the conjugal knot! It is indeed a mystery that how he did survive so long! A long-time friendship abruptly ended with his sudden passing on 31st December 2009!



2. S. A. Hussain: A personal tribute

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Sometime in the mid nineties, my weekend morning gardening in my house at Mangalore was interrupted by someone at my gate: my Rajapalayam Hounds, usually adrenaline charged whenever anyone or anything strange is afoot, though starting off with their usual hi-whine howls, surprisingly stood forelegs up on the gate edge furiously wagging their tails. Quite unusual, this behavior, it struck me as I walked up to see a burly bearded man with a shock of nape length hair extending a huge hand across the gate. "Hussain BNHS" he boomed, as he walked in patting my dogs (must to their astonishment of my fang-friendly hounds).

Anon, we were conversing like old friends. This was the first time I met Hussain. He had come to Mangalore on way to Karkala, his hometown and decided he wanted to meet the Mangalorean who had nearly become his 'boss'. Boss here was the post of Director of the BNHS (Bombay Natural History Society). Hussain was with the BNHS as one of their Senior Scientists and respected Ornithologist. In 1992, on a whim I had applied for the position of Director of the BNHS after I saw an ad in the Times of India – the organization needed someone to take over from J C Daniels – the incumbent. After two rounds of interviews and a seminar of mine, 'The Western Ghats' at the BNHS Headquarters.

A fax from Ullas Rane was waiting for me when I returned home. I had made it: the coveted position as Director, BNHS was mine!!!, Alas, I was given little time to quit my present job and to wind up my domestic moorings to make a final move to Bombay, I reluctantly declined the opportunity and with that, buried my dream of doing what I loved most, studying flora and fauna.

Hussain, who was then probably at Malaysia heading the Asian Wetlands Bureau was, he told me later, quite surprised anyone worth their salt would let such a break in life pass by: 'I was' he said, 'devastated' that such a decision was taken by one from his own backyard home-patch of land in South Kanara.

Over the next decade and more, he became a close friend and confident of mine, dropping by almost every week, bringing something or other – a

durian once – for my infant daughter. His visits were educational for he taught me the nuances of 'mist netting', bird ringing and such other forms of serious research – and spend more than an hour with me once fitting rings on a stray barn owl (*Tyto alba*) that I had saved. He introduced me to websites such as bngbirds@yahoogroups.com and nathistory-india@Princeton.EDU

He was quite elated when he discovered I made the best use of the net for over the years, posting two hundred and fifty observations or notes. At times we exchanged notes on over the sites itself. His stand on the dipping populations of vultures (and sparrows) didn't make him too popular among the 'know it alls'. He consistently maintained that highs and lows were part and parcel of natural cycles and population dynamics of evolution. Mark me, he would often pronounce, the vultures will soon be back and in good numbers too. His words were turning prophetic seeing how there is an upsurge of numbers in both species of late.

During one such exchange of notes through such specialty group websites, Hussain, responding to a query from someone, opined that question be best addressed to another in the group, me, who Hussain said, 'was better qualified to throw more information on the question'. The question was from KBC quiz program which dominated TV show-ratings, was - Why do some birds hop while others walk?

With this query directed to me now, it took a full ten months of research on biped locomotion in birds, the offshoot being a much cited full length paper which was presented at a national conference on ornithology (and later reproduced on many discussion forums on the net). Hussain was impressed enough by my research to gift me a reference book on birds, personally autographed and gifted to him by Salim Ali.

When once, as an Organizing Secretary of a UGC backed national level seminar on western ghats ecology and conservation he invited me to present a paper, I declined, saying that one of the sponsors was from a group that espoused mono-cultural plantation mega – buck group, and that it wouldn't be too prudent on my part to participate in a seminar that spoke about conservation of biota and biomass when one of the funding agencies was practicing just the opposite of what the theme of the conference stood for. The greatness of Hussain was that he never held my stand against me.

A few months ago, he excitedly rang me up from Karkala, asking me to tune in to a local TV channel right away. A thirty minute special feature on him and his life's mission, birds was being aired. I sat glued, fascinated by the verve, vim and vigor of the 'birdman' as he passionately espoused the cause of nature and his life's mission. I called back to congratulate him on riveting

telecast – only to learn he himself hadn't watched it as his house cable-network operator didn't beam that channel.

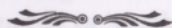
Hussain was as thrilled as a baby when I mentioned to him that I was acquiring a small place at Agumbe and hopefully not far away from now, we could spend some time there in the dense rain forests that the place nestled in. He was in a hurry to get the place ready, once impatiently enquiring that if need be, he'd chip in with some financial help to get things moving faster. Sadly, the house is now ready, only the one who wanted to use it the best way it could, is not around to. 'Hussain sab, what do we do about the hundreds of leeches that infest that place? 'Hohoho', he guffawed, slapping his thighs, 'We? Not we, that's your problem doctor, not mine'. He then mentioned, quite incredibly that a quirk of nature had made him immune to leech attacks and the pests kept away from him.

Despite his athletic frame, he was not in good health, suffering from chronic backache and cardiac problems; yet he put aside (or forgot) every physical and personal hurdle to spend time with scores of zoology students from local colleges for who he was a recognized field guide and mentor.

Last week, driving back from Agumbe I slowed down as we passed the Anekere Lake in Karkala: the first under the sky classroom that young Hussain attended. I watch as humming earthmovers dig deep into the drying expanse of water as scores of volunteers de-weed and clean up the stagnant pools of water. In a few months the near-dead lake will be abrim and alive again, sans *Salvinia* and undergrowth, its limpid waters awash with hundreds of water birds, their calls piercing the environ again. Revival of this neglected patch of water was Hussain's life mission.

Today as I write this piece, I pause to stare at the much-thumbed and yellowed volume on my bookshelf; suddenly, my room echoes with his throaty laughter and the gentle giant's figure looms into my presence. Almost as if on cue, I hear the staccato call of the Red-wattled lapwing.....Oops! Fooled again!I remembered, as another resounding round of hohohos suffuses the room.....it isn't the lapwing that's afoot; it is the overgrown elf's mobile ring tone.

Hussain sab, you are always with us: your commitment to cause, your missionary zeal, your steadfast adherence to ethical values and your courage of conviction to stand alone if need be, is inspiration. You may have passed on sir, but legacy you left behind lives on.



3. My association with S. A. Hussain

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Chairman and Director, Indiana Hospital and Heart Institute

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*I, Dr. Yusuf Kumble, was Professor S. A. Hussain's personal cardiologist. He was suffering from heart problems for last 5yrs. My association was more for a social cause more than a doctor: patient relationship. We initiated "TINY HEART FOUNDATION" for the welfare of children who are affected by heart problems. He was the founder secretary for this organization. He was keen to help all the patients from Mangalore & Karkala. He used to seek information, advice & treatment from me for all these patients. His personal health was the last priority in his life. His loss is a great loss for the whole society. We will remember Prof. Hussain for ever in our life.



This was my first exposure to someone who was not just a doctor but a person who was also a friend. He was a man of many talents and a great teacher. I was much older than him but he was a mentor to me. He was a man of many talents and a great teacher. I was much older than him but he was a mentor to me. He was a man of many talents and a great teacher. I was much older than him but he was a mentor to me.

Over the years, Hussain was a welcome visitor to our home and always enjoyed a good laugh with everyone in my family. He would usually arrive in his motor vehicle and would walk barefoot, but once when he came from a hospital, we were all surprised to see him wearing a formal suit and polished black shoes. With his typical good humour, he allowed us to take him down the stairs and showed us it was temporary. He recovered from the fall. His recovery was extremely fast and he was back to his usual self. We were all delighted that our favourite uncle was back.

4. Remembering Hussain

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The first time I saw S. A. Hussain was in 1977, when he was a young scientist accompanying Dr. Salim Ali on a visit to Madras. Though past eighty, the 'Old Man' kept a busy schedule but was impatient with any kind of fuss or disorder. Hussain's quiet and discreet attentiveness and efficiency made him the perfect right-hand man, without appearing to be so.

At that time I did not know that Hussain would soon become my first instructor in bird studies and from then onwards, a valued friend and senior associate. In 1983, at the start of my M.Sc. ornithology studies I was sent to the BNHS research station at Point Calimere for training. Hussain was then the Principal Scientist of the Bird Migration Study Project there, and I was to report to him. After a tiring overnight bus journey, when I reached early in the morning, Hussain straight away explained the work schedule, in his typical no-nonsense style.

This was my first exposure to serious field research and the training programme was also meant to be a test of my suitability as a Master's student. I was much older than the other students and a married woman with two small children, so there was naturally skepticism about my commitment. Hussain made no allowances, and put me through the same field routine as every one else, which was a learning experience that eventually led to my post-graduate degree. He did not spare himself either and always worked side by side with his staff and students. I could see he was greatly respected for his vast knowledge and for the genuine warmth and kindness of his personality. There was no arrogance in him even as he rose in stature as an internationally reputed ornithologist and conservationist.

Over the years, Hussain was a welcome visitor to our home and always enjoyed a good laugh with everyone in my family. He would generally arrive in outdoor clothes and tough walking boots, but once when he came from Malaysia, we were all surprised to see him wearing a formal suit and polished black shoes. With his typical good-humour, he allowed us to tease him about his smart new look and assured us it was temporary. I discovered that like me, Hussain was extremely fond of the durian fruit. While attending a conference in Sri Lanka, both of us were delighted that our favourite fruit was abundantly

available in Colombo and treated ourselves to large quantities everyday. Later he wrote saying that the durian feasts were the highlight of that Sri Lanka trip.

After moving to Karkala, Hussain was passionate about conserving the Western Ghats and was a major player in the campaign against the Kudremukh iron ore mines. In the year 2000, when I was on study tour of protected areas in the Karnataka ghat region, he gave generously data from his personal collection and showed me the impact of the mines on the fragile ecology of the mountains. This proved to be another valuable learning experience for me, seventeen years after his initial training.

Hussain always spoke to me in Tamil, and the last time I heard his familiar and cheerful *Vanakkam! Eppadi irukkinge?* (Greetings! How are you?) was at an ornithological meeting in Bengaluru about a year before he died. With his passing, the fraternity of birders and conservationists has lost a highly esteemed and accomplished champion who will be missed more than he would have imagined.



5. A friend in need

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It would have been very difficult, if not impossible, to complete my doctoral work under the aegis of Dr Salim Ali - the great birdman of India and the Bombay Natural History Society if S. A. Hussain (Hussain bhai to me and many more people) was not behind me like a solid rock during my 3.5 years stay in India. We had such a cordial relationships that he visited me and my family in Bangladesh twice and several times in Dubai, UAE.

I had my first encounter with him the day I landed in Bombay on the 26th June 1974 when I first went to meet the great birdman, whom all in the Hornbill vis-à-vis- the BNHS called 'old man' and he introduced me to Hussain bhai, Mr Serrao and Rex Pimento when my default guru Mr. J. C. Daniel and Dr Robert B Grub escorted me from VT Station to Juggannanth Sunkerseth Hall in Church Gate B-Road and then to Hornbill House. From that day on and up to my departure from India during the 2nd week of December 1977 he was my local guide and guru.

Almost every 'first' thing I have done in India during my sojourn Hussain bhai was there. On my first birdwatching trip to Borivili National Park during the first weekend of my stay, first visit to Dr Salim Ali's 46 Pali Hill House and first journey out of Bombay to my field station at Coonoor- the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu.

Soon he introduced me to his family- elder sister with two sons and husband staying in a flat in Byculla- with her he stayed his entire BNHS carrier. His family helped me overcome my home sickness and often I would get home made meals or would go to Byculla to share their goodies.

He did the same thing when he escorted me to Coonoor and on way made 2-day stopover in his niece- Mrs. Yasmeen Ahmed's house. I believe she is the first Muslim lady IAS officer and was working with the TN Govt. Afterwards, on my to and fro journeys back to Bombay or towards Calcutta during my annual home leave to Bangladesh I stayed in Mrs. Yasmeen's house. Here also all members in the family were too friendly and helpful. When in Madras, he also took me to the Madras Snake Park- at its infancy and introduced me to Romulus Whitaker and Zaida, with whom I still have a very

cordial relations and to the CCF and Chief Wildlife Warden in the forest department.

Before I left Bombay for Coonoor, Hussain bhai showed me how to avail various bus routes and VT and Church Gate Railway Stations, all book stores selling old and new books, nearest libraries and stationeries, favoured veg and non-veg restaurants, especially places with economic Thalies from Hornbill House to Dadar and Kolaba, grocery, pharmacies and garment shops and Akbarhally's, prayer places, cinema halls and birdwatching areas around Bombay. Also he showed me certain areas and warned me that I must avoid passing through those spots at all costs. All these tips made my tenure in Bombay an easy one.

Our friendship became much more deep-rooted when Dr Salim Ali visited Bangladesh during December 1980 and Hussain bhai became his official escort from the BNHS. When Dr. Salim Ali stayed in Dhaka University Guest House Hussain bhai opted to stay with my family of four. To take our relationships a step further he revisited us in Dhaka during July 1994 and several times in Dubai between 1994 and 2000.

I had the most wonderful lesson from him when we were making a field trip with Dr Salim Ali at a wetland in Bangladesh. Local DFO-divisional forest officer- escorted us from the district headquarter of Sylhet to Sri Mongal, in the north-east of the country.

On our return journey the local forest officials had collected over 50 migratory birds, put them live in a hessian bag and kept it at the back of the 4-wheel jeep of the DFO for his consumption.

As I and Hussain bhai were seated at the back when Dr Salim Ali and the DFO were in front Hussain bhai told the forest officials, please do not give the live birds in a car that is transporting world famous birdman. Please make them 'halal'- means slaughter and then put those inside the bag so he will not hear the sound of the birds that were definitely protected by the Bangladesh Wildlife Preservation Act of 1974 and take offence. By doing this he did not alienate our host and at the same time slaughtered birds remained out of sight and sound of Dr. Salim Ali.



6. My memories of S. A. Hussain

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My first memories of S. A. Hussain are during my student days at Bombay (as it was then known). It was a windy monsoon morning in Bombay of 1976 when I landed by train from Madras at Dadar railway station at about 5 am in the morning. I was in Bombay to begin my doctoral research on bird pollination with the Bombay Natural History Society under the supervision of Dr. Salim Ali. I was greeted at the station by S. A. Hussain and Mr. J. C. Daniel. What I remember clearly is that both were listening to bird calls at the station early in the morning and identifying the birds. I was pleasantly surprised to see this deep interest in birds and natural history, which is the strong tradition of the Bombay Natural History Society.

After settling into Bombay, I slowly became part of the naturalist community of the Bombay Natural History Society, of which Hussain took a central role. He took me under his wing, introduced me to the naturalist community in Bombay and included me in the bird watching trips to Borivili. The trips to Borivili with Dr. Salim Ali, Hussain and others were memorable. I had to leave Colaba by the first bus to catch the early train to Borivili. Hussain was an excellent bird watcher and could identify birds by call notes. He also could imitate bird calls very well. He was handsome, charismatic and attracted youth like honey attracts flies. He had a way with young people and was responsible for creating a generation of naturalists, many of whom have attained important positions. He was Dr. Salim Ali's right hand man and was like a dutiful son to a demanding father. He accompanied him everywhere. He and others at the BNHS toured with Dr. Salim Ali and Dr. S. Dillon Ripley to the North East and Central India to document bird distributions. Their excellent field skills no doubt contributed to the success of these trips. He was with Dr. Salim Ali until the very end, as loyal and loving as ever.

He carried out pioneering work on the honey guides and other birds. He gave excellent and remarkable presentations at the BNHS. He was an excellent speaker but did not get down to the difficult part of writing. Therefore much of his knowledge and experience was undocumented, which is really unfortunate. He had such good stories to tell, and had these been written down, it would have made such an entertaining book.

After the demise of Dr. Salim Ali, the Bombay Natural History Society underwent many drastic changes and Hussain left for his hometown in Karkala, Mangalore. He inspired many young people there, one of which was Geetha Nayak who went onto doing her doctoral research under my supervision. This gave me the opportunity to visit the nearby forests of Agumbe and Kudremukh, and on the way drop in to see Hussain, who was living a retired life at his brother's house but still full of enthusiasm and courage. He was a very active naturalist and had interesting projects. He led Pondicherry University students on nature walks in Kudremukh and they were fascinated with his knowledge and humour. We invited him to Pondicherry University to give talks to our students and took him on a field trip to Kaveli tank where his exemplary skills as a bird watcher were much in evidence. I am privileged to have known him and regret that the talent and experience of people like S. A. Hussain were not utilized more fully by the natural history community in India. May his soul rest in peace.



7. S. A. Hussain – a friend par excellence

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The first time I met S.A. Hussain was in 1969 when I went to receive him and V. S. Vijayan (presently Chairman, Biodiversity Board, Kerala) at the Point Calimere Railway Station near Vedaranyam, Tamil Nadu. These two were research assistants freshly recruited by the Bombay Natural History Society to work under me at the bird migration study camp. Hussain and Vijayan soon stood out as special persons who not only loved birds but also enjoyed hard work field biology entailed. We three became friends over the years and this friendship continued beyond our tenure with the BNHS.

Syed Abdulla Hussain was born in Karkala to Mr. Haji Syed Hussain Saheb, a leading lawyer and MLA in the erstwhile Madras presidency. Although the country environment where he grew up had an initial impact on his interest in nature, the prime factor that motivated him into ornithology was his association with the BNHS. He said, 'it was that magic informality, friendly and honest atmosphere and the sincerity of the people working in the BNHS' that led him to decide his career there. Hussain's good performance was rewarded with several promotions and finally he became one of the top three Principal Scientists along with me and Vijayan.

During his tenure with the BNHS, Hussain held various responsibilities including bird surveys, bird banding, maintenance of research collections, and administration. He joined some field ecological expeditions of Salim Ali and Dillon Ripley, which took him to remote parts of Bhutan, Ladakh, Rann of Kutch, Simlipal and Melghat Tiger Reserves, Arunachal Pradesh, Andamans and Nicobars. He studied the rare Narcondam Hornbill, Blacknecked Crane and the Himalayan Honeyguide and published papers in the Journal of BNHS. He had a good command over English language; was effective in communication skills; and had the natural ability to impress, convince and to achieve. He initiated the now famous BNHS Hornbill Newsletter. He also brought to BNHS conservation funds from Britain.

At this juncture, all three of us looked for a change. Hussain joined the Asian Wetland Bureau (now Wetlands International) in Kuala Lumpur and was elevated to a position next to the Director. Vijayan became Director of the newly carved out Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology in Coimbatore, and I went to Sarawak for a study of the birds of Lanjak-Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary.

Hussain held many conservation positions: Vice-Chairman of the BirdLife International (Asia Division), Member, Governing council, BirdLife International, Founding President of the Biodiversity Initiative Trust, Mangalore and a founding member of the Institute for Restoration of Natural Environment, Nagercoil.

He remained a bachelor although he was not averse to getting married, or was there any dearth of girls who wanted to marry him. I believe the bachelor in him took the upper hand and prevented him from taking the final step, every time.

As a naturalist, Hussain was one of the very best. As a friend, he was par excellence. He had a loving heart which knew when a friend needed help most, and helping he did until the very end. He has helped me too. He loved young people, particularly children, and I am sure he has many friends among them who will miss 'Uncle Hussain'.

During his last years Hussain contributed much to the conservation of the Anekere wetland in Karkala. It would be a fitting memorial for Hussain if this wetland can be developed into a waterbird sanctuary and wetland education centre according to his wishes.

The nature lovers of India have lost a great stalwart. To me it is a personal loss, losing a dear friend who stood with me.



8. Memorable days with S. A. Hussain

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I just received a message about the sad demise of S.A. HUSSAIN at his Karkala home near Mangalore yesterday night. He had a heart problem right from birth and perhaps that was instrumental for this sudden death.

This took me back to those memorable days in the BNHS from 1975 onwards of which Hussain was an integral part. I met Hussain during my first natural history expedition with BNHS - Study of flora and fauna along Godavari river in 1975. I was a novice interested mainly in trekking and being with nature. We trekked from Trymbakeshwar (source of Godavari in Nashik district, Maharashtra) along the river upto the most wonderful place of Nandur Madhameshwar Lake. Hussain exposed me to wonderful world of birds during that trek and I was impressed with his field knowledge and experience. We became instant friends.

We were together in many BNHS activities - field research, nature education members' programmes. Hussain was excellent in his public relations and he used this skill to help the BNHS enormously. He was a senior scientist and was in charge of many large research projects - Avifauna of the Sahyadris, Point Calimere, Bird Ringing etc. He would encourage interested amateur members to participate in the research projects and write research papers. He was largely instrumental in developing BNHS collaboration at international level with RSPB, ODA etc. His major contribution at the BNHS was getting ODA funding for the Conservation Education Project which resulted in establishing the Conservation Education Centre at the BNHS land Goregoan. He also used all his contacts and skills to get offers of land from various state govts to establish large research centre of the BNHS. His sincere efforts (along with that of other senior scientists at the BNHS that time) were instrumental in establishing SACON at Coimbatore.

Hussain also brought in Armed Forces to the BNHS through his wonderful talks and field demonstrations. We carried out many education programmes especially for armed forces at their headquarters. Hussain had a

great vision for the BNHS and he tried hard against all odds to achieve the best for the BNHS. Hussain was excellent in writing articles, editing etc. It is unfortunate his vast knowledge did not culminate in books.

Hussain worked very closely with Salim Ali and Humayun Abdulali and both stalwarts appreciated Hussain's scientific and public relations skills and contributions in the BNHS.

I was fortunate to have such a wonderful scientist - friend right at the beginning of my entry into natural history world. In fact Hussain was the most popular scientist to the BNHS members, mainly because of his friendly interactions and easy accessibility. Hussain shifted to Karkala about 12 years ago, almost at the same time when we shifted to Bengaluru. We met a few times at our home in Bengaluru, however we could not make to his several invitations to visit Karkala. We were in touch on internet / phone intermittently.

I will definitely miss him a lot and I know that apart from his friends and members of BNHS, even the Avifauna that he loved so much will miss him.

Our heartfelt condolences in his memory.



9. My memory of Hussain

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Though I do not have anything profound to say, I appreciate the opportunity to add my commentary to the memory of Hussain.

I had the rare honour of being involved with an international conservation program to benefit endangered species and biological diversity from late 1976 through 2005. One of the major countries involved in this program was India with the Bombay Natural History Society, the earliest of our cooperators. Several major multi-year conservation research projects were initiated in 1980 with three of them with BNHS. While Dr. Salim Ali was the designated Principal Investigator, Hussain was given the task of taking the lead on one of the projects focusing on avifauna. I was the program's U.S. administrator.

I can't remember the first day I met Hussain, but our association soon became personal with Hussain coming to the US to meet with various counterparts and scientific institutions, staying in our house, playing with my children, discussing the politics of conservation in India, railing against colleagues and government bureaucrats. He was hard working and strong minded. Sometimes I felt that his stubbornness got in the way of better judgment. When ever I came to India, we tried to get together.

Eventually, when he broke his relationship with the BNHS, we stayed in contact as good friends. When we had a chance to help him with a project, we did what we could. When his health waned, we worried and kept in contact directly or through friends such as V. S. Vijayan and Robert Grubh.

The last time I saw Hussain was four year ago when I was taking my last trip to India before retirement in October 2005. Hussain seemed like his old self, cynical, serious, joking, easy to be with. Our relationship had covered nearly 30 years.

To hear of an old friend's passing is always sad. His family, friends and colleagues are left to remember his legacy. I think Hussain's legacy is in the peoples' lives that he touched many students he tutored and helped in various ways, his writings and scientific contributions. All these things are meaningful to me, but perhaps the essence of his role in my life will be his friendship and humanity.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the recognition of Hussain's life.

10. My friend S. A. Hussain

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I came to know of my friend S. A. Hussain's demise while on a field trip yesterday. It took a while for the news to sink in. As I was travelling down to Tirthahalli from Hosanagara, it began to hit me. I would never hear his jolly voice over the phone again; never hear that hearty laugh again... In the last 10-odd years that I have been in Manipal, he has been a friend, mentor and guide, ever available for advice and I can't remember a single occasion where he failed to cheer me up when I was down.

I met him for the first time at the Mangalore railway station, where both of us had come to greet a common friend - J. P. Puyravaud, who was arriving from Pondicherry to deliver a lecture at my institute. I don't know how we became friends, but in no time we were calling each other regularly and meeting up whenever Hussain Saab was passing by Manipal. I worked out the design for eco-tourism facilities for Harike Lake in Punjab for him, though finally the project did not see light of day. Later we collaborated on the project to rejuvenate Anekere Lake at Karkal.

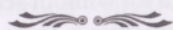
Through it all, I developed tremendous respect for a man who lived life on his own terms, had great love and affection for friends and humanity in general and could teach you a lot without seeming preachy. I still remember an incident when we were inspecting a farm-house in Jarkal as a model for our Harike project. The owner, whom Hussain Saab knew, was away and we were moving around in the property when two of the guard dogs rushed us, snarling ferociously. While I was terrified, Hussain told me in a low, confident voice not to run, but to stand my ground and not look them directly in the eye. Sure enough, the dogs stopped just short of us, growling. Slowly, they sniffed us over, then decided that we were ok! They didn't trouble us after that, but my heartbeat rate was a lot faster than prescribed!

On another occasion, he demonstrated his sharp understanding of bird behaviour - by slapping his thighs to imitate the display of dominance among cocks by flapping their wings. The cock in question immediately perked up and started flapping its wings and crowing, trying to intimidate its unseen rival. I remember that he could also do a good imitation of the call of a langur.

I last met him about a month ago, when he dropped by with his nephew. I had been waxing eloquent about a new fish joint at Manipal and he wanted to test it out. We had a nice lunch together, with prawns and anjal fry and we parted happy. There were plans afoot that Hussain Saab, Shiva and I would go to Sikkim in February, where he would stay at the forest rest houses we were to camp in, while Shiva and I would go trekking.

Once when I was particularly depressed with the happenings at work, I had told him that I was considering quitting. "Don't go off without telling me," he'd admonished me. And now he has gone off without telling me... There is a recollection I have about a conversation we had long ago about migratory birds during one of his visits. I remember him saying that he once spent some time with some American who was studying bird migration. He said that, unlike most of our perceptions, most bird migrations don't happen in large groups. The American had found that a large number of migratory birds travel singly and at night, from his studies using radar. Intriguingly, he found large numbers of birds that travel in the reverse direction too. This piece of information, though it didn't strike me as remarkable then, started fascinating me later. I always meant to follow it up with him sometime, maybe work it into a story that I was planning... Somehow, that didn't happen, there was too much for us to discuss whenever we met. And now, sadly, it will never happen.

Goodbye Sir, dear Hussain Saab... I will miss you badly. May your soul rest in peace. I am sure that whichever heaven you find yourself in; there will be plenty of your feathered friends to keep you busy!



11. S. A. Hussain: A tribute

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I knew Hussain in my late school and college days when I used to frequent BNHS. We stayed together for a week at Borivili National Park netting and ringing birds. He had a great sense of humour and had many interesting stories to tell of his various trips throughout the subcontinent. A dedicated conservationist, he fought for many of the habitats that he visited throughout his career including Borivili and the Andaman Islands. Sometimes when more publicity was needed, he would even prod Salim Ali to make a representation to the Government, as the two of them had travelled together on many ringing and conservation trips.

He didn't look well at all at the Bangalore meeting in November 2008 and I remember mentioning this to him and whether he was taking adequate treatment. He mentioned that he had acute diabetes, but nobody ever thought that the end would come so soon. I was in Goa when Carl D'Silva phoned and gave me the news of his passing. The best memorial to Hussain would be to fight for the preservation of habitats that he espoused.



12. A tribute to the great teacher

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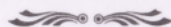
It was on 31st December 2009, when I was on the way to Bhagavathi Nature Camp at Kudremukh, leading the Rotary Group Study Exchange (GSE) team from USA, I received a phone call about the sad demise of Prof. S. A. Hussain. It was really shocking news for me. Usually Prof. Hussain used to guide our GSE team to Kudremukh, giving them the interesting information of our Western Ghats. Since this time his health was not good, I didn't mention about this programme. But the destiny has taken away him from us forever.

I met Hussain Sir for the first time in 1997. Prof. Hussain was a very much down to earth man, although he was a person of international caliber. He mixes freely with anyone who met him. He had the wonderful art of communication through which he could able to reach any people from children to the elders. His liking for traditional foods of Tulunadu was very interesting. He was fond of special wild *Colacacia* (Mara Kesu) *pathrode* and Tajank (*Cassia tora*) dosa, the monsoon specials.

Prof. Hussain was the guiding force for me to start the 'Rotary Children's Nature Club' in 1997. He used to attend every meeting of the Nature Club and create interest in the kids regarding nature. Although he was suffering from cardiac problems, he used to take our kids for trekking to Kudremukh, Kollur and Sitanadi Nature Camp sites.

Hussain Sir was very much involved in all the environmental activities of the Rotary Club of Karkala. He was instrumental in starting the 'Save Anekere Project' a major environmental project of Rotary Club of Karkala, in which he had motivated the students and youths in and around Karkala. He had prepared the master plan for conserving and developing the Anekere Lake. Till his last breath he was always telling about this project. So it is our duty to fulfill his wishes of conserving this lake and its biodiversity.

Hussain Sir even though physically you are not with us, but you will always be in our hearts reminding us about our duties of conserving Mother Nature. Great salutations to you Sir.....



13. My good teacher

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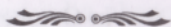
I started browsing my emails to know when I first met Hussainji. After going through the email archive, I came to know it was because of the bird watching forum, 'bngbirds'. It was in October 2006, when I came to know about him from bird watching e-group. He was responding to an email related to Kudremukh, in which he mentioned that he is from Karkala. I was very happy to know about this person, who is a resident of my own hometown, was indeed a very senior ornithologist. The first time I met was in December 2006 at his residence, near Anekere. It was because of my sheer interest in bird watching and bird photography as a hobby, I developed great interest in him. Even though his relation with me and my family was only for 3 years, it will be remembered forever.

Those valuable three years of my association with him taught me so many things. It was not just about the nature, but also about many other topics which were of common interest between us. He used to join me for birding in and around Karkala. I came to know about the subtle things of Nature. His few decades of field experience were unmatched. Whenever I used to talk about him with his relatives, I used to refer him as 'walking library'. He used to narrate small stories when describing bird behavior. I want to quote two things that learned from him. We were shooting a pair of Shama bird nesting at Durga RF. He mentioned about the parental instinct: "*Parental instinct is so strong in feeding parents that the birds will come back to feed their young even if the nest itself is disturbed (brooding parents tend to abandon the nest & eggs)*"

I used to see a rapid deforestation in the land adjacent to the main roads and highways. He quoted this when I mentioned my concern over the fragmented forests in low lands of Dakshina Kannada District: "*The wildlife will adjust to change in habitat, but we should not bring this change drastically*". I had opportunities to attend his guest lectures to the students of Degree College and Pre-university College. He had good communication skill; it was so easy for him to talk to any one of any age. He left us with his memories and inspiration to work for some cause. Every time when I passed

near Anekere, his charming face appears in my mind. He was a great inspirer and a down to earth person.

It was on 31st December 2009, when I was on the way to Bhagavathi Nature Camp at Kudremukh, along with the Rotary Group Study Exchange team from USA, we received a phone call informing about the sad demise of Hussainji. I went to his residence, and paid my last respects. I had lost my good teacher. Hussainji, I humbly pray for your soul to rest in peace. You will always be remembered by all of us.



14. My 'Google' uncle Hussain

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There are some people, who trust you more than you trust yourself. And it's their trust that's what gets you going.... You break the barriers of mediocrity because you know that there's someone who believes that you are different. Hussain uncle was one of them, always forcing me to do something different, always telling me that I could do much better. I knew him since I was a little kid and for a very long time I didn't know that he wasn't my blood relative, but nevertheless he was like a part of my family. He would come home sometime during the weekend to stay over and politely dictate the kind of dinner he wanted. He had a great fancy for food. But, then Hussain uncle was affectionate of many things! He knew something about everything. He was like my 'Google' uncle. He taught me so many things from the pronunciation of yacht to the taxonomy of the southern cassowary. Hussain uncle was a person you could talk to about anything and everything. We probably had the best combination of a relationship; he was like a fatherly figure to me, in more a best friendly way. He was a great man, with his own erudite style. He's one of those very few men who influenced and inspired so many people. And I'm definitely one of those lucky ones.



15. My memories of Hussain

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Government of Sikkim
Sikkim

Oh, you'll see flocks of White-crested Laughing thrushes", was his first comment, when I said six of us BNHS members were planning a natural history trip to the Sikkim Himalayas around October 1980. Memories of the BNHS Sikkim collection trip with Dr. Salim Ali, Dr. Biswamoy Biswas and other assisting stalwarts shone in his eyes. I was fascinated even before the trip actually materialized. Meena Haribal was our chief organizer as usual, Manek Mistry managed to get us a grand budget of Rs. 3000/- from World Wildlife Fund as it was called then; he also started collecting food items and I saw dehydrated onions and egg-powder for the first time in my life. That trip with Meena, Manek, Arati Kaikini, Ulhas Rane and Marcelin Almeida, was a major turning point in my foray into the world of birds and other wildlife. And I have Hussain to thank for it. In Sikkim I met Ganden, my life partner and husband today of 27 years, in another adventure in this Sikkim wonderland.

"Hussain". That was how we all knew him. No Mister or Sir. Of course I could somehow never address him that way like other seniors in our group. I was too much in awe of him. His charisma, that of a gentle friendly God-Brother, always ready to pay attention to my little agonies and joys, to give his time to listen, ever ready to lend a strong reliable shoulder, to make me feel good and sometimes at the end of the day even make sure I would get home safely. There were so many incidents, I am sure many would reiterate the bond he effortlessly built with those he knew and those who knew him.

Nature excursions with the whole BNHS group was something I looked forward to all week. It was the best time of my life. All of us would get into a really early morning train in the dark or a night train, reaching our destination at some unearthly hour. I remember we slept on the railway platform till it got a bit bright, then packed up and began some of the best walks ever in the great outdoors outside Bombay. Walking through some village outskirts, then through the forests, at one place a huge dog came charging out of its nearby compound barking like mad. Most of us just froze. Hussain didn't even blink I think. He just walked towards the charging animal and in a confident friendly tone said something so comforting, that dog just melted and within seconds was wagging its tail, begging to be friends. That was the sway Hussain generally held over most around him too, I felt.

Perhaps I was just too starry eyed with anything that had to do with BNHS. Before I re-joined college for my Masters, I spent some time in the Bird Room, helping with the cataloguing and redoing the labeling for lots and lots of specimens we called 'skins'. Mr. Humayun Abdulali and Hussain's presence was everywhere. Members would frequently drop in to look at some birds, students visited and I made a lot of valuable contacts. The smell of naphthalene, opening and closing the collections, checking mammal skins with other interested members, all was quite regular fare. It was a treat when artists came in to paint. Mr. J. P. Irani, Rita Ganguli, Carl D'Silva produced some of the most amazing works on birds and I was lucky to see them create their works of art. Hussain saw to it that I did not miss anything. After his trip to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, he sat with Carl who took time off from his studies at J. J. School of Arts to paint among others, the best ever picture of the Narcondum Hornbill. Hussain spoke about their Andaman & Nicobar trip, the giant Robber Crabs climbing coconut trees, the glass-bottomed boat rides, it was mesmerizing. Meena had an interesting observation about the annual appearance of a Dark Grey Bushchat at a certain place in Bombay. She felt very strongly about no harm coming to her annual visitor and woe betide anyone who mentioned any specimen collection. For some reason that never made sense to me Rex Pimento, perhaps BNHS's finest bird taxidermist would find any opportunity to say 'The only good Indian is a dead one'. I learnt how to skin delicate little specimens from him. Very occasionally people like Dr. Rauf Ali, Romulus Whitaker dropped by. Isaac Kehimkar my college senior was working in the library with Serrao, a living encyclopedia. It was energizing but some of the details have faded over time now.

My first ever field camp at Point Calimere however was unforgettable. Sri Lanka was a dark smear on the horizon across the water. Shroff and I were the two student volunteers, Hussain, Dr. Robert Grubh and Shekhar were the Camp Organizers. We learnt a few rudimentary Tamil words from a smart list put up for the members, like '*Tanni venum*' when we were thirsty, but much of our time was spent exploring the beaches full of bright crimson crabs waving one giant claw and scuttling away when we approached too close; forest patches where mist nets were put up for trapping birds and open stretches where Blackbuck gamboled. Hussain showed me Malkohas, a Trogon and with Dr. Grubh taught me how to extricate birds from the nets and measure and ring them before releasing them. He took Shroff and me to the lighthouse on the beach and I saw for the first time what was until then only in story books. I walked barefoot only to experience painful jabs from a creeping plant on the ground aptly called *Tribulus terrestris*. The shores were

literally littered with large whole shells and conches which were amazingly clean and shop-shiny and I was able to make a small horde to take back home. Guided by Hussain, I developed a great love for Mother Nature and her glory. There were batches of members to take around, there were boat rides where we had to sometimes get down into the shallow slush to push the boats; there were some great long walks and talks and an opportunity of a lifetime to learn about wildlife. It was a month long natural history dream come true for me.

Back in BNHS for a while, I remember an episode when a great big deluge of rainwater brought in so much water in our library that we all had to rescue the precious books by forming a human chain and physically handing them down and out of BNHS and rushing them into the Prince of Wales Museum. It was back-breaking work for most and Hussain like Mr. Daniel and indeed the entire BNHS family did their bit to salvage what is today a heritage collection. I still remember him on the stairs passing books down with his strong big hands, all the time being his jovial and good-natured self.

Mr. J. C. Daniel, more of a father figure was in charge of BNHS. He encouraged me to take up Animal Physiology for my Masters and I did so at the Institute of Science, a stone's throw away from my BNHS. Upon completion of the two year course, around 1981-82 he sent Renee Borges and me to attend a month long international workshop at Kanha National Park. I always feel that was the fertile ground where the idea of Wildlife Institute for India germinated. There were lots of big names, we had some amazing lectures and field exercises, we were told about remote sensing, satellite technology, radio-tracking and chemical immobilization, we even did a post-mortem of a tiger cub probably killed by a territorial male. Mr. H. S. Panwar took us on elephant and jeep rides and I saw Tigers to my heart's content and at enviably close distances. We had sightings of a Leopard, lots of Barasingha and Blackbuck, herds of silent Gaur and so much other wildlife, but I had an old camera. That dearth was filled by my new friend, a really young and impossibly slim Shekar Dattatri, today's internationally renowned photographer, film maker and conservationist. I missed Hussain.

I missed him again when Mr. Daniel sent me to Bharatpur, any ornithologist's dream, to work in the Hydrobiology Project in the Keoladeo Ghana. In that amazing wonderland I was suddenly alone and friendless until the oppressive working atmosphere helped forge an abidingly strong bond between Dr. Vibhu Prakash, (BNHS's raptor and vulture specialist today) who was studying the birds and Dr. Philip McGowan (Director World Pheasant Association today), then a visiting student. We were there for each other.

Vibhu saw to it that my field work was safe in the company of trusty Brijendra from nearby Jatoli village his own field assistant. It was a four-month adventure, roaming the wetlands till my feet almost rotted in the canvas 'hunter' shoes, my hands stinging with sunburn even if I held them in a bucket of cool water at the end of the day; wading near the nest of the Sarus Cranes, even skinning a dead python and a Painted Stork among others and getting locked up in the library at night. With the help of famous Mirshikar Ali Hussain, his young son Mehboob, and the Sahnis, each trapping waterfowl in their own unique styles, we ringed birds till our bodies ached with fatigue. We lived in the palace compound of the maharaja of Bharatpur and I could open my window every morning and see peacocks and lots of other wildlife. For a while I even took care of a really young Jungle Cat which Mirshikar Ali Hussain had found. The maharaja's son was a young man who used to shoot Green Pigeons for his golden and black retrievers, whom he would bring to us for treatment occasionally. Perhaps he too needed friends. The project in-charge Dr. Vijayan sent me back to Bombay when the Keoladeo Ghana was closed following police firing upon crowds protesting the declaration of the Keoladeo National Park. Back at BNHS I just had to look at Hussain to burst into tears. And that is one shoulder he lent that I will never forget and always treasure.

Mr. Daniel then attached me to the Endangered Species Project under Dr. Asad Rahmani, probably the finest conservationist BNHS has today or will ever have. We were to study the elusive Lesser and Bengal Floricans, a kind of grassland peacock ('Khar-Mor') related to Bustards and Houbara. By then Ganden and me had got married. We had kept our growing friendship quite private and I was off on yet another adventure, little knowing or caring about any need to advertise it. It was hence really shocking to find that Hussain for some reason did not approve. When I finally built up the nerve to tell him, he told me hill people cannot be trusted. It was a bitter blow to me that Hussain was so disapproving that he even refused the sweets I brought to BNHS after Ganden and I got married. At least my parents were happy that their daughter had at long last decided to settle down.

Life however continued with the Florican project adventure. Dr. Rahmani, a gem of a human being, was very motivated and to top it all Ganden also got an opportunity to join the project after his firm retrenched some staff due to financial problems. This time it was Ganden and me on a year-long adventure where we got to travel to almost all parts of the country in a beat-up old jeep, surveying our amazing country's grasslands, forests and its rich diversity, even staying and dining in palaces where just the bathrooms could hold upto 40 people comfortably! Dr. Rahmani himself traveled with us during

some surveys teaching us the ropes. In the beginning I worked in Sailana grasslands near Ratlam and we were able to ring some Lesser Floricans. The great Dr. Salim Ali himself came to ring the first bird. Of course Mirshikar Ali Hussain trapped the birds along with his young son Mehboob, who used to sleep protectively outside our door at night. Meena came to spend some time at Sailana and we took turns sitting in the upturned basket hide from whose cramped confines we watched the Florican males and their breeding displays.

Life took me away from Hussain's comforting presence in BNHS when Ganden and me decided that we would raise our family in the Himalayas. We left BNHS and went to Sikkim. It was a struggle as we did not have enough savings and no jobs to be had that we liked. Also there was no BNHS in Sikkim and I did not wish to do anything else. Finally on the strength of a proposal I wrote supported with a letter of recommendation from Mr. Daniel, and which Ganden pushed through in the government I finally got a job in the State Forest Department. At last I could start some BNHS-like activities in Sikkim. However I was very much in the family way and an important activity for me while lining our frugal nest was scanning 'Birds of Sikkim' by Dr. Salim Ali for names for our baby. Mom-in-law intuitively said if I was going to have many children as is a trend in the villages like hers, I was to have three daughters first. Since some of her other predictions would uncannily come true, I confidently chose three names from among the birds of Sikkim; Minla, Yuhina and Sibia. We were gifted with Minla on 18 June 1986, aided by Mom-in-law and Ganden himself in our little two-room flat in Gangtok, just as I got the government papers confirming my job. I was an officer now. Almost five years later Yuhina was born and looking at my field work and outdoor interests, Mom-in-law decided just two children was not a bad idea. This was good because shortly after, another good BNHS friend Lima Rosalind decided to name her baby Sibia!

When Minla was six months old, I took her to Bombay to my parents as winters in Sikkim were something I was still getting used to; after all my body had spent a quarter of a century trying to remain cool. Now it resisted trying to remain warm all the time and I found that chilblains did not happen only in foreign countries. Of course I resumed my trips to BNHS, much to my mother's chagrin. The best part of that trip was that Hussain was really happy to see Minla and me. He saw that I was indeed happy and Minla was a bouncy, contented baby who anybody could easily fall in love with. He gave her from his table a tiny teddy bear which fitted snugly in her little paws. She startled him by suddenly stopping her play and turning and falling instantly asleep in my arms. She had that habit which was really a blessing for a new mother.

After that we kept returning to Bombay almost every winter. Soon the girls grew up, Bombay became Mumbai and our work in Sikkim became more and more intensively conservation oriented. BNHS still tugs at my heart and soul. I still am Dr. Rahmani's student. It is indeed and will always remain a major part of my life thanks to people like Hussain. He called me up some time back when his flora-enthusiast friend Brigadier I. M. Rai mentioned me in his Sikkim stint. We ended the conversation with Hussain planning a trip to Sikkim in the coming spring. I was hence deeply anguished to get a phone call from his grand-nephew one morning shortly after on 31 December 2009 that he was no more. We never knew he had a hole in his heart. I know I am only one of the many people whose lives he enriched in his own special way and for that I remain eternally grateful. He was a special human being and I treasure the little time he shared with me on this voyage called Life.



16. The Celebrated Naturalist of Karkala – S. A. Hussain

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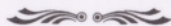
A legitimate and honest naturalist of international repute, born in Karkala near the picturesque environment of Anekere pond, was S. A. Hussain. He used to perceive and interpret the nature on the light of his field experience with the legendary birdman Salim Ali and thereafter as the Director of Asian Wetland Bureau.

Contribution of S. A. Hussain to ornithology is titanic. Nevertheless he was an authority in all the compartments of nature such as medicinal plants, flowering plants, chordates, invertebrates etc. He was a mobile encyclopedia to recall the scientific names of most of the animals and plants, especially birds. He visited many countries and participated in conferences, panel discussions relating to nature conservation. He has many books and publications of international standard to his credit.

Above all, S. A. Hussain was a fountain of inspiration to all students and researchers. He was the anchor of Bhuvanendra Nature Club as a resource person. The Nature Club has organized many orientation camps under his guidance successfully. He inspired the students to develop the sense of nature observation. He motivated many students of the college to take up environmental research. Few of them are working as researchers in the country and even abroad in the field of Biological Sciences. I was lucky to have his encouragement and guidance during my research work.

S. A. Hussain was most effective in presentation of any topics related to nature. He had the art of teaching the primary school children or to guide the college students or researchers convincingly. He was devoted to spread the concept of nature conservation among the youth who are the future guardians of the nature.

Bhuvanendra Nature Club of Sri Bhuvanendra College, Karkala, places on record the services rendered by S. A. Hussain to the club activities. To make it more meaningful his family has donated all his books and journal collections to the club for the benefit of students. The confidence, concentration and strong convictions made S. A. Hussain a worthy naturalist.



17. Appreciation of my mentor SA Hussain

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"The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind" - Khalil Gibran, a Lebanese American artist, poet, and writer.

It was sometime in May 1998, I had completed making a list 100 species of birds and was eagerly awaiting the reward for being able to identify all the birds I had seen. The promised reward came in the form of a pair of binoculars and a book - "The Book of Indian Birds" by Salim Ali. I was overjoyed to see through the binoculars and to receive a copy of a book on birds. The book was signed as- 'To: Geetha Nayak, Best wishes and a bright future. Keep your eyes, ears and mind open you will learn a lot by observing' - S. A. Hussain (23-06-1998). At that moment all that I could think about was to flaunt these gifts among my classmates and friends than to grasp the meaning of the words he had written.

Ever since my childhood, I have been curious about the life around me. I sat for hours watching parakeets feeding on *Caesalpinia pulcherrima* pods in my garden, pigeons nesting in the school buildings, crows and kites nesting on a large banyan tree close to my home, digging the ants' nests and catching butterflies. I was very intrigued by their activities and wondered if they led a life like humans. I had no idea that studying life around me could very well be a profession.

It was during my pre-university days that I met S. A. Hussain after his talk on nature and birds. I was so fascinated by the photo slides he had shown. Like all the other students, I had too lined up to get his autograph. When I managed to get his signature and a pat on my back, I couldn't contain my happiness and joy and immediately recounted the story to my father. It was a complete surprise when my father told me S. A. Hussain was his childhood friend and they were at school together. Initially it was hard to believe that my father and S. A. Hussain could have been childhood friends, but very soon a photo of my father, S. A. Hussain and Sanat (a businessman and a resident of Karkala) proved that it was indeed true.

After a week or so, I was thrilled to meet S. A. Hussain at my home in Karkala; my first meeting still remains vivid in my memory. I was a late riser, even on the day when S. A. Hussain came to visit my family, and the first thing he told me was that if the birds were to sleep so late in the morning, they would miss food for the entire day and that he would ask my mother not to feed me. Although I was embarrassed, the innate rebel in me reacted saying: 'As a child even you would have been a late riser, but did your mother do that to you?' and to this, his reaction was a loud laugh without either a hint of anger or frown and I was thoroughly pleased to see he wasn't like any of the elders in my family or teachers in the school. S. A. Hussain loved children and believed that it was not a cudgel or a rebuke that would bring discipline to children but kindly words and pure affection. And for me, who always disliked following any rules or orders from elders or teachers, his kindness and friendly nature enabled me to bond instantly with him and he became my mentor, philosopher and a great friend for years from that day onwards. His wise words of advice (among many other) "Keep your eyes, ears and mind open you will learn a lot by observing" continues to guide me in all walks of my life, both professional and personal.

It was during this meeting that he encouraged me to watch birds and promised to reward me if I came up with a list of 100 species of birds. I was delighted by this offer and started spending a lot of my time on the banks of a lake close to my home, called Anekere. He told me to keep a note of all the birds I saw, with an illustration marking the colours. I thoroughly enjoyed this exercise and was intrigued by the variety of birds wading through the water in the lake. Every now and then I reported back to S. A. Hussain on what I had seen, and during one of the meetings he lent me a bird book (older version of "The book of Indian Birds" by Salim Ali) and asked me identify myself all that I had seen. The first few species were easy to identify: Little Cormorant, Bronze winged Jacana, and Egrets. He appreciated me for my keen interest and my patience for coming up with both the list and my (fairly) neat illustrations. As I went further, I came across a black-and-white bird in my notebook. I found to my dismay that there were several similar black-and-white species. I had no idea which one I had seen and had made a note of. I asked him to identify it for me, but instead of identifying it for me, he encouraged me to go back and find the bird again. Later, I found that the bird I had seen was a Magpie Robin but that there was another species which looked very like it (at least for a novice in the field). This one had a white eyebrow and was a Large Pied Wagtail. I was so fascinated by these variations; from then on, a parakeet was not just a parakeet, but a Rose-ringed Parakeet or a Blossom-headed Parakeet. I was completely hooked on birding. That

spark of interest in birds made me think about a profession in ecology. When I look back, I feel those words of encouragement; appreciation and guidance are what helped me excel in my studies during my undergraduate years and to choose a profession in ecology. I owe him a great deal.

It was through S. A. Hussain, I met two other great teachers who gave direction to my professional career: Dr. K. P. Achar (my professor in undergraduate college), and Dr. Priya Davidar, (my PhD supervisor at Pondicherry University).

As a young girl, I used to be very outspoken and headstrong and that got me into trouble with family, peers and teachers every now and then. I always went to S. A. Hussain, who very patiently listened to me and helped me see through situations. He never judged me or anyone else, but always told me, "It's all a passing cloud and things will always be clear with time". There are many memories, and his advice I will treasure all my days. I feel very fortunate to be his protégé.

S. A. Hussain was also one of my most treasured friends, he was very critical (which helped me to see through my mistakes), he was saddened when things did not go well in my personal relationship, he was always concerned about my financial stability and he took utmost pride in seeing me complete my PhD. He always endured my tantrums and bad temper with good humour and he provided a strong emotional support when my father passed away. He was a great friend and always stood by me whatever the circumstances. He taught me to accept things and people as they were and he encouraged me to believe that there is always light at the end of tunnel. The lesson I have learnt from his life is to be patient through the pain and difficulties in life. I still feel his presence very strongly.

I finish with a particularly appropriate quote from Kathryn Patricia Cross, a scholar of educational research: "*The task of the excellent teacher is to stimulate 'apparently ordinary' people to unusual effort. The tough problem is not in identifying winners: it is in making winners out of ordinary people*". Thank you S. A. Hussain, Sir.



GLIMPSES OF S. A. HUSSAIN

About Me



From Hussain's blog: Selected articles

Born in 1944 at Karkala, Karnataka. Joined the BNHS as a Research Assistant in 1969 in the Bird Migration Project. Participated in many field assignments and ecological expeditions of Drs. Salim Ali & Dillon Ripley on behalf of BNHS. From 1980-90 as the Principal Scientist BNHS. Done fieldwork and published scientific papers on rare Indian species such as the Narcondam Hornbill, Himalayan Honeyguide and the Blacknecked Crane. Has over 35 years of field research in Natural History, Ecology as well as leading multi-disciplinary research teams. Planning and organising seminars, conferences at national, regional and international levels. Participated in: Bonn Convention; Biodiversity Convention; Ramsar Convention; International Ornithological Congress. Overseas assignments: Development Director, Asian Wetland Bureau, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Vice-Chairman of the Asia Division of the BirdLife International. Member, Governing council, BirdLife International Cambridge, UK. The President of the Biodiversity Initiative Trust, Mangalore and the Member, Karnataka State Wild Life Board.

1. Coastal Karnataka – Industrialization and marine pollution

All over Asia fishing is an important activity as it provides a significant proportion of the protein intake of local people. Until recently this has been compatible with the preservation of biodiversity and integrity of the ecosystems. In recent years, however, traditional fishing methods have been replaced with modern commercial fishing techniques. This has often led to severe over-exploitation. Habitat degradation, pollution and eutrophication have further contributed to the depletion of commercial fish stocks and the virtual collapse of coastal fishery in some areas. In contrast to what many decision-makers believe, fish farming and shrimp farming is not a panacea for economic development of coastal lagoon and mangrove systems. The large-scale conversion of mangroves into shrimp ponds has been particularly damaging to many coastal ecosystems. Not all coastal lagoons and mangroves are by any means favourable for intensive aquaculture: many are best used as extensive farming - that is, traditional fisheries. Despite their many values, mangrove ecosystems are amongst the most severely threatened zones in India.

The most serious threats are - over-exploitation for timber and firewood, timber and charcoal, reclamation for agriculture, industry and human settlement, conversion to aquaculture ponds. Pollution from industrial and domestic effluent as well as pesticides runoff of agriculture. The state of Karnataka has a 270 km long coastline falling within its revenue districts of Udupi. Uttara and Dakshina Kannada and a total Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 8700 km*. The entire area comprising of EEZ. Shoreline vegetation and backwaters is very rich in biological diversity. A well watered but short hinterland beginning from the top of the Western Ghat complex provides all the ingredients to support the downstream coastal ecosystem. Twelve major west flowing rivers systems meander through lowland forests, secondary woodlands and gently undulating plains and spread out into wide estuaries, lagoons and backwaters, extensive mudflats and several small patches of mangrove forests. These have resulted in a series of small estuarine systems along the 300 km long coastline. Most of these estuaries and creeks are narrow and permanently open to sea. The area has a variety of fauna and flora in habitats ranging from tropical montane forests of Western Ghats to coastal mangroves. The region is well represented by land mammals, birds, reptiles and other vertebrates and invertebrates. Both the shoreline and offshore areas have their own variety of rich biodiversity.

Rapid organization, steady growth of human population and the resultant demand for food & shelter and the changes in land use patterns have placed considerable stress on natural resources and ecosystem of the area. Hitherto pristine coastal zone along the Udupi. Uttara and Dakshina Kannada districts will be subjected to rapid developmental activities due to increase accessibility from the national Highway and the Konkan Railway. The next decade will find the area under constant influence of developmental activities, and some of the critical and fragile coastal systems will be under heavy pressure. The threat to marine/estuarine systems in India in general, and Karnataka in particular, is so severe that urgent action is needed at all levels to contain this trend. Establishment of a Coastal Biosphere Command Area (CBCA) in Coastal Karnataka will be most appropriate under the prevailing conditions. Management and protection of threatened species and critical habitats in a region which is under multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional influences is a difficult task. Unlike in the homogenous sites such as Forests, where it is easier to manage the system through establishment of Sanctuaries, Reserves and National Parks under a legal framework and under a single authority, handling of the complex Coastal Zone where human settlements, multi-agency operations in industry, agriculture and economic exploitation is being carried out from historical times, needs a different approach. Historical, socio-economic and commercial considerations will have to be accommodated along with the need for conservation of habitats, species and vital resources.

It will be possible to address the problems and at the same time institute adequate and proper conservation efforts through the establishment of Coastal Biosphere Command Area. The principles and objectives of Biosphere Reserve management could be adapted, modified and evolved from the accepted criteria and making it to suit the local area needs.

2. Bharatpur story

At the beginning I missed Bharatpur as a possible launch pad for my career all because of Mr. J.C. Daniel's (then Director of the Bombay Natural History Society BNHS) new ventures. After being selected and being briefed about my assignment, I was a bit unnerved when I thought I heard him say that I have to join the bird migration field camp in ... "Barrackpore". In panic I approached veteran staff of BNHS who assured that it was actually Bharatpur near Agra but cautioned that for a warmth loving southerner, I may find it too cold for comfort. The alternative was Point Calimere (PTC) in the sunny south and to my good (?) fortune JCD was generous to concede to my request and that's where it all started.

But all through my formative days in PTC the mystique of Bharatpur was relentlessly drilled into me by my senior at point Calimere, Robert Grubb, in a series of anecdotal rendering of life at *Shanti Kutir*, the guesthouse in Bharatpur National Park: exploits of *Mirshikar & Sahni* bird trappers from Bihar, escapades of my senior colleagues Jamshed Pandey & P. B. Shekar, culinary skills of legendary cook Habib Khan and above all the "Old man" Salim Ali, and his doings there. Gradually Bharatpur was an ornithological *Shangrila*, a must pilgrimage destination for me. The great opportunity came in around December, 1976 when the Old man with S.D. Ripley arrived there. I cannot recollect how I landed but was somewhere there hovering in the insignificant fringes (may be I was sent by HQ as an errand boy to deliver something?). While the Old man and Ripley were making serious plans for Bharatpur, I was thankfully ignored and had good time soaking in Bharatpur magic.

My next big opportunity at Bharatpur was to set up a full fledged field station in 1980 for BNHS/USFWS Avifauna Project and Bharatpur Ecology Project (Ecology project was later handed over to my colleague V.S. Vijayan). Old man was a constant visitor inspiring and encouraging us at every step. Just about at that time Prince Charles was to visit Bharatpur. British High Commission asked Belinda Wright who in turn asked the Old man who promptly suggested my name to escort the Royal visitor.

Years have passed by since those heady days. One hopes one could capture the old magic and display it at the Interpretation Center for all to soak in the wonder that Bharatpur almost is.

3. Kudremukh National Park (KNP) – Possible strategy

The Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Ltd (KIOCL) will close down all its operations in the areas leased to them and hand over the infrastructure to Karnataka Forest Department. Considering the vast infrastructure that will be left behind by the KIOCL it is quite necessary that some urgent steps be undertaken by the Department to ensure that appropriate measures may be put in place so that the best advantage can be accrued from the area without contravening any rules governing various Central and State Acts pertaining to National Parks and Protected Areas.

The township (area 320 ha, human population c. 10,000, 1991 Census) currently maintained by KIOCL has all the modern facilities (including water supply and sewage treatment/disposal). A well maintained public park, Guest houses, Hospital, banks, Central School and college, Post office Fire station, Police station, Office buildings, staff quarters, helipad, places of worship and well appointed market places & a bus stop. The layout of the township is well designed in an undulating landscape. The township has all the modern amenities such as STD/ISD, mobile telephone network, cable TV network

All these will be abandoned by the KIOCL and the land will be reverted to Karnataka Forest dept. These will have to be dealt with. For the KIOCL there are two options:

1. Demolish all structures and establishment in the township and mining areas and leave behind a ghastly concrete/steel rubble of a "ghost town" or
2. Hand over the main structures to appropriate agency/authorities (National Park Authority) for possible future action/usage for which substantial "seed money" to deal with it. A sum of Rs. 50 Crore as the compensation for so many years resource exploitation. KIOCL with all the profits it has earned from mining can be expected to extend this small parting gesture.
 - Considering the fact that the area will be reverted back to National Park (N.P) authorities and as such any full scale independent township cannot exist within the N.P., private commercial activities cannot be allowed, nor there do any chance of promoting a general tourist holiday resort or hill station or any non-forest/wildlife related institutions / agencies.
 - Perhaps only feasible and pragmatic way to overcome this dilemma is to organize the existing infrastructure to establish some kind of National/ International Research & Convention Center managed under a Nationally Constituted Administrative & Operational authority with Karnataka forest as the Nodal agency/Convener.

Recommended course of action:

Constitute a Task Force with a definite mandate and time frame to:

- a. Conduct a preliminary feasibility study & report.
- b. Negotiate with KIOCL and all the likely stake holders
- c. Prepare an appropriate Action Plan
- d. Source out funding regimes (including income generating schemes – e.g., facilities can be hired out as an International/National Environment, Scientific and Research & Conservation related Conventions, Seminars, Congresses, Training schemes, University field research Centers etc.)

4. *Conservation: Are we prepared to face the challenges?

In the recent years many colleges, both at undergraduate and post graduate levels, are taking up environmental studies as a part of their regular curriculum. Unfortunately most, if not all of them, are not adequately equipped with properly trained faculty in field biology. Most of labs are geared to cater for age old and traditional methods and very little exposure is given in field aspects.

Research Perspectives in Environmental Sciences: In the current scheme of things in the Academic circles, particularly at University level studies one is not very clear about the definitions of various disciplines dealt with. Conservation problems essentially deal with multi-sectoral issues and unless a research project incorporates the wider ecological components (in some cases, one is essentially faced with the prospect of incorporating human ecology as well), it will be inappropriate to draw scientifically sound conclusions. Another very essential and important issue is the urgent need to get away from the present exclusively laboratory oriented research approach to a comprehensive field oriented research on any environment related scientific projects. Sadly our current Academic system is not adequately geared with training facilities for field oriented research programs, either at faculty or at research scholar levels.

Our Universities and colleges must pay more attention to training both faculty and students in fieldwork regimes which should include data design, collection, analysis and eventual interpretation. Students' observational skills, analytical approach and the philosophy of scientific temper must be honed and fine tuned to a degree of competence. Then only our young researchers will be able to take on any Eco-Conservation problems with greater competence and come up with appropriate scientifically viable solutions.

Concepts in Eco – Conservation: There are a wide range of concepts which deal with Ecological –conservation. These could be at landscape level,

community level, habitat level, species specific, micro or macro level and embrace all the life forms as well as related non-living land, water and atmospheric components. Human race, of course, is in the thick of all this as a major influencing factor. Within this broad framework the concepts that follow deals with Conservation Biology within which all life forms – from unicellular to highly evolved are included. Since the ecological canvas is very vast it will not be possible to attempt all the components.

One has to absolutely prioritize conservation according to the urgency it needs and invest all efforts, energies and resources at evolving appropriate and effective conservation policies and measures. In all this one has to be acutely aware and alive to the fact that any activity done by humans either consciously or otherwise has a direct multiplier and often detrimental consequence to the very resources being exploited for their survival.

Application/Trends in Eco – Conservation: Ecological conservation is essentially effected at two or more levels. The major players in this are the government on one hand the stake holders on the other. Neither can be effective without the other. Unfortunately, in spite of the best of the efforts conservation issues get bogged down by politico-social, economic, sectoral, regional and many other pressures, often pitted against and at logger heads with one another. For example, conservation of a tropical forest is in logger heads with proponents of tribal rights, resource organized on (mining, energy production etc) and a plethora of “development” issues. On the other hand the “development” efforts bring in their own train of catastrophic aftershocks such as pollution, degradation, overexploitation and depletion of the very resources. One needs to keep a balance here in approaching the problems in a pragmatic way without giving into emotional and/or other narrow considerations. We must be prepared to face this challenge in order to succeed in our collective efforts. The scientific community, particularly those in ecological research, must be unbiased in reporting scientific facts based on their findings and conclusions.

Management of Natural Resources: Management of our natural resources involves multi-sectoral approach. The major role players in this serious game need to be in constant interaction among themselves. Who would be these “managers” of resources? Is it the Government which formulates policies, laws, regulations and implements these according to certain governing principles and through its various designated agencies? Would it be the scientists and researchers who set upon themselves to find out the cause and effect of eco conservation needs and come up with remedial measures? Or will it be the larger user groups and stake holders who benefit from the very resources? While each plays its designated role, it is also essential that there

must be close co-ordination among these major players if we are to achieve any success. If there is any co-ordination, then it appears to be inadequate, considering the rapid environmental degradation these days. While a few major issues get noticed, one such being the recent alarm on rapid decline tiger populations in India, by and large a great deal of research findings are confined to scientific journals, conference proceedings and/or ubiquitous "Scientific Reports" which find their way into library shelves or dusty official archives and remain dormant there forever! What is needed is the product of all these data must feed into policy planning and governance of the resources. Our policy planning is a top down approach with very little or no inputs from scientific community and the stake holders at the bottom level.

Fortunately the acceptance and ratification of the Biodiversity Convention seems to encourage a much practical bottom up approach in policy planning procedure in which all stakeholders will definitely play effective role in managing and conserving our resources. The National Biodiversity Bill must be accepted, fine-tuned and implemented by all with fullest consideration it deserves.

(*Presidential lecture delivered at a UGC sponsored National Level Workshop organized at St. Agnes College, Mangalore).

5. Of birds and other sounds

One of the less understood and confusing aspects of amateur bird watching is the intricacy of bird calls. The oft heard Iora has four or five different call notes sounding like four or five different birds, not necessarily of the same species. Just as one draws attention to the sweet richness of the four-note call *I weel beeat you*..... of the elusive Spotted Babbler to a raptly attentive group of bird watchers, in flies the Iora and with it barrage of embarrassing questions from a disillusioned audience.

A colleague thinks he has a solution for such emergencies. "Next time you are out", he advised, "pretend not to have heard the call to begin with. Talk rapidly the possibility of a certain species being seen usually around, by which time either the bird would have flown or the inquirer's attention would have shifted elsewhere. Better still, blame it on the impish mimicry of the much maligned Racket-tailed Drongo" Let their tribe increase!

The Fantail Flycatcher's call resembles the summer love song of the Magpie Robin. Well almost. Once a fellow bird watcher spent a better part of his morning's outing looking for what he presumed to be an agitated monkey calling in a lantana bush, which ultimately turned out to be a rather alarmed female Grey Jungle Fowl (alarmed male *Red* Jungle Fowl, for your information cackles like its domestic cousin). Imagination plays tricks when one is out

alone bird watching. The soft, throaty plaintive mewing of a lost kitten, oftener than not, turns out to be the male Malabar Trogon calling to his mate whose answer sounds like muted *whirr*... of a quilt maker's bow.

A colleague from the distant Himalayas has a trick or two up his sleeve. Faced with occasional dull moments while out leading a bird watching group, he toots out the cow-bell hoot of distant Himalayan Pygmy Owlet, Which promptly brings up a bevy of three species of tits, two species of nuthatches, four species of flycatchers, white-eyes, minivets and an assortment of babblers. If ever one hears the cacophony of the lower primary third graders while birding in the sub-Himalayan wilderness, one has to bear with the riotous revelry of the irrepressible White capped Laughing Thrushes.

A recent addition to the bird watcher's kit is the portable tape recorder. This writer, once in search of owls, played a pre-recorded high frequency caterwauling call of the Spotted Owlet while sipping tea on the lawns of a forest bungalow. In flew half a dozen intrigued Spotted Owlets, whizzing past our ears, while pandemonium reigned over the tea table.

By far the most amusing thing happened recently to a colleague and a good friend. Huddled over a warm fire one cold evening at a remote Himalayan outpost, he whipped out his tape recorder to regale us with his recordings of various bird calls from deep south, all except one call, which he said, he had been unable to identify for quite some time. After a long and spirited discussion one among us meekly said that the call sounded rather like a thin stream of water falling over dry sand apparently. The worthy colleague in his zeal to record the distant call of an elusive Scops Owl, had rushed out from a remote forest rest house one late, dark night, only to find the owl unresponsive for length of time, and oblivious of the active recording machine, had answered a rather urgent call of Nature!

6. A man for all seasons

Ornithology of the Indian sub-continent has been dominated by personalities who were, in some way or other, giants of their own age out exploring the frontiers of the Empire. What started with A.O. Hume, that veritable politico-natural chronicler of a bygone era when style and elegance marked the distinctive individual stamp of the writer, has gradually evolved into the current crop of glossy pocketbook guides lacking in elegance and descriptive style.

Somewhere along the period not too long in our memory, and yet contemporary enough to relate to our own era, Sidney Dillon Ripley II, a rank outsider to the Raj legacy, teamed up with an Indian, Salim Ali, to give the region's most comprehensive tome. The Ali & Ripley duo straddled a

transitional era when the ornithology of the region was being replaced from an enjoyably descriptive, delightfully rendered and immensely readable, though lengthy style to a spate of eco-statistical statements rendered in clinically scientific tomes on the one hand and quick-fix, over illustrated field guides with a bare minimum rendering in a telegraphic language on the other. And now the era of the last of the giants seems to have come to an end in the passing away of Ripley in Washington on March, 12, 2001.

Ripley, born in New York on September 20, 1913, had an early exposure to natural history. His grandfather, Sidney Dillon, the first Board Chairman of the American Union Pacific Railroad, way back in the 1870's had acquired a 2,000 acre land in Litchfield, Connecticut, where the boy Ripley grew up to study nature. This early exposure later shaped his interest and career in ornithology. Soon after his graduation, his spirit of adventure enabled him to travel east on a year-and-a-half long expedition to New Guinea and Borneo studying and collecting zoological specimens. He obtained his Doctorate in Zoology from Harvard University and joined as an Assistant Curator of birds in the Smithsonian Institution where he later he was to become the Secretary.

His association with the Indian subcontinent began with a short stint in the Allied Intelligence Unit based in then Ceylon during the World War II. This opportunity enabled him to study the birds of not only Indian subcontinent, but also of Thailand, Burma and China. It also brought him two close future companions – his wife Mary Livingston, a colleague in the services, Salim Ali, both of whom he eventually outlived.

Ripley's most productive years were to follow soon after his assuming the post of Professor of Zoology and the Director of Peabody Museum at Yale University. Most of his scholarly writings in natural history and ornithology, as well as the initial foundation for the long association with Salim Ali to write the ten-volume magnum opus *THE HANDBOOK OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN* were done in this period. Ripley's name was already familiar to Indian ornithology through his *SYNOPSIS OF BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN*, published by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) in 1961 and revised in 1982.

His golden years were during his tenure as the Secretary of the prestigious Smithsonian Institution, Washington, a post he discharged admirably till his retirement in September 1984. Under his vision and leadership many an innovation was brought in the museum concept and the Smithsonian scaled the heights of Science, Technology, Culture, Arts and American history. For his contribution to American folk history Ripley was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honour of the United States in 1985.

Ripley's close association with BNHS goes back to the time he was posted in Sri Lanka in the forties. His frequent official visits to India enabled him to spend time studying bird specimens in the BNHS collection and visit friend Salim Ali, an association which was to blossom in later years into a long lasting research collaboration between BNHS and the Smithsonian Institution. Ripley was instrumental in channeling Smithsonian funds to continue the BNHS/WHO Bird Migration studies, which enabled the Society to not only collect data, but also to encourage and train young Indian biologists in bird studies. He helped finance and take active part with Salim Ali in the field in joint ornithological expeditions to Simlipal, Orissa, Melghat, Maharashtra, Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan Himalayas. These expeditions provided field data and helped both Ripley and Salim Ali to gather material for the *HANDBOOK*, apart from obtaining valuable museum specimens.

Ripley was literally a "towering" personality, with matching intellect, scholarship, wisdom, grace and a delightful sense of humour. As the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution he was constantly busy fulfilling his mandate and in the process, inevitably, he developed a reputation of being rather unapproachable, particularly to his staff and casual visitors. Being a fast track perfectionist himself, perhaps he was sometimes impatient with those who could not keep pace with him.

It was, however, a different story altogether when he was out on field trips in the Indian subcontinent. He was friendly and kind to the team members and always looked after their welfare. He didn't spare himself any hard work and always toiled along with the others on manual chores – whether it was pitching tents, packing, carrying and loading enormous expedition luggage, or walking miles to collect specimens and finally skinning and preserving them. After a hard day's work, it was always a treat to listen to the conversation between Ripley and Salim Ali under the lamp-lit tents. The subjects covered would be varied and Ripley would regale the audience from a fascinating repertoire, laced with humour and excitement in equal measure.

It is indeed sad that the era of personalities seems to have ended and Ripley was perhaps one of the last of the giants of Indian ornithology. For three daughters, Julia, Rosemary, Sylvia and 11 grandchildren, as well as a number of young ornithologists who had the good fortune to have known him closely, Sidney Dillon Ripley II will always be a pleasant memory – a Man for All Seasons.

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7. Mr. S. A. Hussain (Mangalorean Star: September, 2009)

Mangalorean.com

<http://www.mangalorean.com/browsearticles.php?arttype=mom&momid=89>

Mr. Hussain is a renowned ornithologist and environmentalist, who has specialized in Field Ornithology & General Ecology. He was born to Haji Syed Hussain and Kulsum Hussain, on August 13th 1944 at Karkala, Karnataka and he joined the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) as a Research Assistant in 1969 in the Bird Migration Project, where he participated in many field assignments and ecological expeditions of Drs Salim Ali and Dillon Ripley on behalf of BNHS. From 1980-90 he was the Principal Scientist for BNHS. He has done fieldwork and published scientific papers on rare Indian species such as the Narcondam Hornbill, Himalayan Honeyguide and the Blacknecked Crane and has over 35 years of field research in Natural History, Ecology as well as leading multi-disciplinary research teams. In addition to this, he is also experienced in planning and organising seminars, and conferences at regional, national and international levels. His hobbies include nature walking, music and travel and his favourite books include those written by Jim Corbett.

Mr. Hussain has participated in the Bonn Convention; Biodiversity Convention; Ramsar Convention and the International Ornithological Congress. He also hold a portfolio of impressive overseas assignments which include the post of Development Director, Asian Wetland Bureau, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Vice-Chairman of the Asia Division of the BirdLife International and Member of the Governing council, Birdlife International Cambridge, UK. Currently he is the President of the Biodiversity Initiative Trust, Mangalore and a Member for the Karnataka State Wild Life Board.

Mr. S. A. Hussain speaks to mangalorean.com on those interests that are very close to his heart.

What is the prime factor that brought about an interest in the field ornithology and general ecology?

The environment that I grew up in, in Karkala, had an initial impact on my interest in nature, but the prime factor that made me get seriously interested in ornithology and general ecology was my association with the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). I had some vague idea that BNHS was a membership organization and they published books and journals in natural history of Asian region and that Dr. Salim Ali was associated with it. So, way back in 1969 when I joined as a Research Assistant in one of their field stations of the Bird Migration Project, I was quite impressed by the dedication,

discipline and methodical field work along with the friendly work culture, encouragement for pursuing individual interest in nature. The emphasis was on meticulous recording of scientific data, gaining broad based knowledge of field ecology and tempering one's behavior with modesty and honesty. It was that magic informality, friendly and honest atmosphere and the sincerity of the people working in the BNHS that made me realize that I must make the best of my career here.

In later years, as I developed my confidence and took on more and more responsible work, I was to realize how important was my initial grounding in shaping that confidence to face greater challenges. Peer pressure was one of the factors that kept one always on one's toes. We were constantly challenged, tested and pushed by colleagues and other fellow researchers and it was a constant battle to be upto the mark either in our discourses or in the writings of scientific papers.

What is the influence of your birth place Anekere Karkala in shaping your career?

Though I was a happy child, last of a brood of ten, in a family as any, I was somehow developing an odd curiosity of looking around to examine a bird, an insect or a flower or anything that looked unusual to me. My companions in play would not understand what they perhaps thought was my odd behavior and would make fun of me. Quite often I would find myself excluded from their games and whenever that happened I would slowly drift towards Anekere and sit alone lost in my world.

Anekere was indeed a virtual window to the wonders of nature to me. There were frisky dragonflies which performed incredible flight patterns, there were birds of various sizes, shapes and colors, and the fish that came very close to shore to escape from being eaten by the bigger ones. I never tired of watching the White breasted Kingfisher that kept up its relentless sallies to get a fish. Apart from the aquatic plants, water insects, fish, reptiles (there were water snakes and turtles too) and birds; that heady smell of the marsh was sheer magic and that magic was to stay forever in my life.

Did you receive encouragement and support from your parents, relatives and friends?

My frequent escapades to the fringe of Anekere, sometimes much past the failing evening light, did cause some alarm to my parents and servants were dispatched to all corners of the lake to drag me in. They generally ignored my idiosyncrasies and left me to my devises so long as I studied my school lessons and generally kept myself clean. My father had a double barreled shot gun which he never used, but my elder brothers and my uncle occasionally went out to shoot ducks and other water birds at Anekere. I never failed to

accompany them when this happened for it gave me an opportunity and excitement to actually hold the shot birds in hand and study them. I used to hang on to them, savoring every bit of the colors of the feathers, the shape of the body until a servant would forcibly take them away from me to dismember them for the pot. My curiosity was satisfied but strangely, I never felt sentimental about dead birds as such.

I shall never forget two early everlasting lessons I learnt - one from my mother and the other from my brother. These were my earliest lessons in nature conservation. My first lesson was when I was about six years old. In the backyard of our house next to a large cattle pen there used to be a Ramphal tree (*Anona reticulosa*). One day I discovered that a pair of brilliantly colored purple-rumped sunbirds had built their nest on the edge of slender branch. For sometime I watched them going in and out of their nest - flimsy, unkempt gossamer wrapped bundle of dry leaves. My curiosity to see what lay inside the nest was growing. And finally one day gathering enough courage I climbed the tree. In my eagerness to reach the thin branch at the end of which the nest preciously hung, I lost my balance and came crashing down with the branch and the nest in my grip.

A pair of hands pulled me up from the ground and my mother, who had seen me fall, had rushed in full of motherly concern, to dust me up and comfort me when she saw the branch with nest in my hand. Next thing I knew was that my ears were almost being wrenched from my head and my normally gentle mother, now an epitome of wrath and fury, shaking me up rather violently. I could not understand why I was being subjected to this rough treatment. She sternly pointed at the nest and warned me in no uncertain terms that, it was alright to just look at the birds but that if she ever finds me so much as touch a nest or eggs or their young, she would not only peel the skin off my back but also starve me to death. She then made a servant boy to tie the broken branch back high on the tree and sternly warned that if the sunbird parents didn't comeback to the nest she will banish me from the house.

I was desolate all through the day not because of the fate of the birds but because my mother who loved me most had refused to speak to me for the rest of the day. It was the next morning as I was under the Ramphal tree watching the sunbirds back in the nest when I felt my mother's loving arms over my shoulders and I learnt my first lesson in nature conservation.

My second lesson was learnt a few months later and this time the scene was Anekere. I had been watching a pair of whistling ducks with a brood of nine ducklings feeding in the shallow edge of the pond while one of the babies got entangled with long weeds, unable to free itself (it was the youngest of

the brood hence apparently weakest). Its parents and siblings, oblivious of the fate of the youngster, had slowly drifted away. Here was a baby that had been inadvertently abandoned by its family which I thought, needed to be rescued since it would either drown or be eaten by some predator. I decided to free the baby and bring it home to look after it. I put the fluffy baby in my shirt pocket and sauntered casually back home.

Before anybody could detect what I was up to, I kept the baby in a small basket after stuffing it with rags and kept it on the top of a cupboard where it could not be seen and sat with my school bag pretending to be doing my homework. About an hour later my elder brother walked into the room with the basket and told me rather quietly (which was menacing enough for me - he was a school teacher who knew how to tame any unruly pupil) that I should take back the baby and leave it where I had found it.

Many years later when I was seriously into researching avian ecology, I recalled these two early lessons - *that a) parental instinct is so strong in feeding parents that the birds will come back to feed their young even if the nest itself is disturbed (brooding parents tend to abandon the nest & eggs) and b) mortality of the weak and last of the brood is a normal phenomenon in large brooded non-precocial birds.*

Causes and circumstances to choose this career?

Like everybody else my early ambition was to become a doctor, an engineer or a pilot. Both in school and college I was an average student without much academic or extracurricular brilliance. Being interested in nature was not glamorous in those days. My attempts to get selected for medical seat failed miserably and my general health took a beating by frequent bouts of rheumatic fever. Inevitably I had to settle for biology as my career. Luckily for me I got my first job as a research assistant in BNHS field station and never looked back thereafter. It was an exciting, challenging and upward climb all the way.

Whom do you propose as your guide in your career and why?

It is undoubtedly Salim Ali who is responsible for guiding and shaping not only my career but also my entire personality in later half of my life. He was a hard taskmaster who believed in teaching by example. Meticulous and methodical, with painstaking attention to minutest of details, he would never tolerate any shoddy work from his students or colleagues. Intolerance was so acute that often he would launch into a cutting tirade against the hapless transgressor - if only for a few minutes. He would however cool down soon after, devoid of any rancor. On the other hand he would never hesitate to accept his own mistakes and even sincerely apologize for any wrongly made comments.

It was extremely difficult for a beginner to gain his confidence, but once one passes that hurdle and gains his trust, which may take several years of sheer hard work, and achieves exceptional order, there are no more barriers. The master and the pupil share the same thoughts, ideas, sentiments and outlook. Very few, if at all, have achieved that distinction. The other ultimate sharing point between the 'guru' and 'shishya' was that subtle sense of humor that would come across clearly in his conversations.

Sincerity and brevity was his forte and his writings in English language were delightfully readable. He would write and re-write a sentence several times over until its meaning comes through clearly and up to the point. In the final effect it always appeared to be an easy flow of thoughts. He had a simple and child-like curiosity about things around him and would keep his mind open to any bits of information he could glean from any source, however lowly it may be. He could be asking a scientist the intricacy of the working of his latest scientific invention and in the next instant he would, with equal humility, asking some road side basket weaver about the fine art of his weaving.

The other side of his personality spectrum was his aversion for anyone who is given to pompous boastful behavior and talks too much. Salim Ali would never let go the opportunity of puncturing the inflated egos with sarcastic but subtle comments interjected in all apparent innocence, and the poor victim, if he is clever enough, would soon realize his mistake. If the person is too "full of himself" to ignore the warning shot, he would be told in no uncertain terms to shut up and leave.

I slowly, but surely, absorbed most of these lessons that were never meant to be taught in the conventional sense. They were inculcated over the years, slowly but surely. Knowledge as never meant to be flaunted but to be shared. A good teacher also happens to be a good student at the same time.

Which are the most memorable moments to place in record in your career?

The most memorable moment in my career was in 1971 when I was given the sole responsibility of planning, organizing and implementing a field project which required initiative, enterprise, intelligence and courage. Narcondam Island is the remotest and most uninhabited in the Andaman group. It is a volcanic island nearer to Myanmar, rising abruptly to an altitude of 900 m from the deepest part of the Bay of Bengal. I was to live on that island for about two months along with an assistant to study the flora and fauna, particularly the rarest and endemic Narcondam hornbill which is not found anywhere else in the world. It was tough but equally exciting assignment.

I had to organize the logistics, permissions (special permit needed from Govt. of India to land on that island), travel, local administrative support,

boats, wireless communication arrangements and food supply apart from camping equipment etc. I also had to organize a police party to drop me in the island in a special boat. Being an uninhabited island there was no landing facility and we had to not only jump onto the shore between crashing waves but also get our equipment and supplies on shore. I stayed in the island like Robinson Crusoe for nearly two months, studying the flora and fauna and later published the first ever paper on the ecology of the rare Narcondam Hornbill. That was a pioneering effort which helped to build my confidence for taking part in many more such expeditions during my tenure at BNHS.

My other memorable moments were during my travel to the remotest part of high altitude wetlands of Ladakh, almost on China border, to study and publish scientific paper on the ecology of the rare Blacknecked Crane; to do a pioneering field study on the ecology and behavior of the rare Himalayan Orangerumped Honeyguide in Central Bhutan mountains; expedition to the Rann of Kutch to record the breeding of the Greater and Lesser Flamingos as also organizing and taking part in all the ornithological expeditions of Salim Ali and Dillon Ripley to the Simlipal Tiger Reserve in Orissa, the Melghat Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra, Bhutan, Himalayas and the remotest NE hill forests of Arunachal Pradesh.

With regard to conservation and management of environment in India according to you what is the present trend and what will be the future demand?

India seems to be at crossroads as far as conservation and management of environment is concerned. On the one hand there is definitely a greater awareness among the general public about the need to preserve environment from the ravages of pollution etc. Thanks to the emphasis in schools and colleges about environmental education and awareness, the younger generation is much more concerned and wants to do their bit.

On the other hand with the sheer volume of so called progress coupled with population explosion, matters seem to go out of hand and are impossible to manage. This is particularly so in urban development and industrial sectors. In spite of the awareness created, the majority of population simply do not seem to care about the environment. Even the so called social elite in urban areas and industrial giants seem to be offering only lip service to pollution problems. Profit motive seems to override the responsibility of minimizing environmental damage.

On the other side of the spectrum, in rural and forested areas a different kind of pressure seems to be building up. Large scale encroachments of prime forest lands both by the poor and the rich for various reasons create another anomalous situation which is exploited by certain vested interests.

Everybody wants to become rich in the shortest possible time and no one is prepared to do hard work and take risks. Everyone wants shortcuts. India seems to be suffering from some kind of mental block in terms of achieving progress. In contrast, the Philippines which has economic condition similar to India seems to have achieved far more progress. Let me give a comparative example.

As the Director of the Asian Wetland Bureau, I was involved in advising the Philippine Govt. on overcoming the problems faced by their fishing industry. Due to earlier ill advised large scale aquaculture, the production of fishery crashed over the years and the coastal communities were really suffering and the economy was also in doldrums because the marine fish exports had drastically declined. We quickly put together an international expert group to look into the problem on ground and come up with some solutions which required changes in the local fishery practices and general cooperation of the villagers in coastal areas. The people willingly accepted this and were able to overcome their problems slowly but surely over a few years and today their fishery is not only in top gear but sustainable on long term basis. The general all round economic condition of the Philippines is much better than India today. That is because the people of Philippines wanted the change and were willing to help themselves.

In contrast to this, the outlook of Indian populace is entirely opposite. Sometime ago I participated in a seminar on so-called '*matsya kshama*' conducted in Mangalore. It was obvious that everybody was harping on government cash subsidies, diesel subsidies, support price from govt., tax concessions, loan waivers from govt. etc., No one was talking about the solutions to overcome the problem or how best the systems can be changed to get better and sustainable yields. No one was willing to learn lessons from elsewhere so that they can improve their own lot. No one was willing to wait for solutions to be found so that in the long run everybody benefits. How can you expect to attain progress with this kind of mental attitude?

The Kudremukh Wildlife Division has been vacating the *adivasis*. According to you is the stand taken by this department correct or not.

I think the whole issue is misunderstood by a majority of common people. I do not want to go into the intricacies of the meaning of the term "*adivasis*" here. It will be too long a debate. The Kudremukh Wildlife Division is a very small arm of greater government machinery that looks after our precious forest wealth. This small arm is carrying out only the instructions from higher ups. In this case it is no less than an order from the Supreme Court of India. The Supreme Court has ruled that a minimum portion of the

forest wealth of India needs to be protected at all cost under a provision of the Constitution of India. This has a sound scientific basis.

Encroachment of protected land by any individual is illegal and the law requires that he be evicted. It is as simple as that. It is the responsibility of the government of the day (Central & State) to ensure this and while doing so they will have to take a policy decision as to how they will solve the human problem. They will have to provide alternatives for those genuine persons displaced first - which is so called "*adivasis*". Then there are other deliberate and habitual offenders who grab forest land out of sheer greed. In both cases it is the responsibility of the law makers, local MLAs' and MP's to ensure that the people are made to understand the law as also to make suitable arrangements for resettlement of both legal and illegal encroachers. Ironically, these very law makers instead of carrying out their responsibilities get into vote bank politics and help to break the very law they have passed in the government. The officials who are made to carry out the orders are made the scapegoats in this murky political game. Having said all this, yes, I fully agree that the stand taken by Kudremukh Wildlife Division is not to be faulted since they are only doing their duty. If the people feel they suffer because of this, let them go to their representatives, local MLA's and M.P's, to find alternate solutions for their woes.

You have participated in many national and international conferences/workshops. Kindly share your experiences with us.

Besides participating in many national and international conferences/workshops I have also been involved with organizing and conducting some major events in Asia and western countries. It is indeed a great experience to work with experts and people of different nationalities. A tremendous amount of goodwill and camaraderie is generated at these meetings and one gets to increase one's capacity to assimilate knowledge from various cultures and societies. Of course there are language barriers, different perceptions, varied outlooks and style of functioning but in the end it is all fun to be there and learn a lot.

The Japanese are quite polite and will never oppose your point of view directly though they may not agree with you. But once they start trusting you, you can have the best teamwork on any issues. Americans are an overbearing lot and behave as if they know everything and tend to dominate the discussions. Unfortunately for them this very trait isolates them in a multi country debate. British, though a bit condescending, will restrain themselves and are willing to hear other's point of view. All other third world countries, particularly Africans and SE & West Asians, are a happy-go-lucky lot and are fun to work

with. Unfortunately our own South Asians, with the exception of Sri Lanka and Nepal, talk too much and put on a bit of air which is usually resented by smaller nations.

On the whole, unlike political meetings, all environment related conferences and workshops are conducted in a very friendly atmosphere and participants very quickly build up a good rapport among themselves.

My best and happiest experience was at Kushiro, Hokkaido, Japan in 1993. It was the "Ramsar" global Conference on Wetland ecology in which over 3000 delegates from 79+ countries took part. Kushiro is a delightful little coastal town in the northern part of Japan and the entire city was decked up with festoons, banners, and artifacts for receiving the delegates. The enthusiasm of the local people, media and the host government was indeed palpable. It was a great time for me for, apart from being fully involved in organizing the meetings, chairing scientific sessions & technical committees, I was also the only Asian representative out of six participants from all over the world to take part in a live worldwide TV debate on wetland conservation issues.

The Japanese national TV network NHK not only made me their main international anchorman to telecast in English about the daily progress of the conference, but also made a special documentary on Japanese fishing community with me as the anchorman. My most delightful moment was the final banquet of the conference when the entire Kushiro citizens with their families attended the dinner festivities. Among them I met a Japanese family with a cute little one year old girl who became very friendly with me. Next morning Japan's leading national daily newspaper '*Ashahi Shimbun*' splashed on its front page a large photograph of myself holding up the little baby!

What is your message to the student community?

Though our older generation is too old to change and bring changes in their lifestyle, what with corruption, ignorance, negligence, greed and all the failings of human kind, I still have great hope in our younger generation, particularly the student community. Rapid advances in science and technology in the communication field has brought the world together to share the knowledge base. We only need to assimilate this within our lifestyles and bring revolutionary change in our outlook, approaches to problem solving and generally shake ourselves out of the shackles we seem to have been trapped in. Do not accept any system that does not help anyone. Be bold and ask questions as to why anything should not be changed for better. Look around with your own vision, imagination and ideas and collectively bring in changes in attitudes, personalities, lifestyles and work for greater common good.

AFFILIATIONS

International

Bird Life International-U.K.

Vice-Chairman - BirdLife Asia Council. Tokyo (1992-2000)

Board Member - BirdLife Executive Council. U.K. (1992-2000)

International Ornithological Congress: Member - IOC Committee XXII

IOC Vienna -1998.

National

Government of India: Member - National Committee for Wetlands Mangroves & Coral Reefs. (1992-97)

State Governments:

Member - Bihar State Government Committee for Research and Development of Wetlands of Bihar (1992-97)

Member - Punjab State Government Committee for R&D of Harike & other lakes of Punjab State. (1992-2002)

External Examiner: M.Sc. by Research, A.M.U. Aligarh - 1992

External Examiner: Ph.D by Research, Gujarat University - 1993

Visiting Professor - Kuvempu University, Karnataka

Positions held

Present Position: Chairman, Biodiversity Initiative Trust, India.

Honorary:

Vice-Chairman, BirdLife Asia Council, Tokyo.(1992-2002)

Council Member, BirdLife International, Cambridge.(1992-2002)

Hon. Wildlife Warden, Udupi District. Karnataka. (2004-2007)

Member, Karnataka State Wildlife Advisory Board (2006 -)

1994-96 - Visiting Professor, University of Malaya.

1992-94 - Development Director, Wetlands International Asia-Pacific Malaysia (Formerly Asian Wetland Bureau)

1985-92 - Principal Scientist, BNHS Bird Migration Project Coordinator
- ODA\BNHS Project

1980-85 - Project Scientist, BNHS Avifauna Project

1979-85 - Actg. Asst. Curator - BNHS

1970-79 - Sr. Research Assistant, BNHS Ornithology.

1969-70 - Research Assistant, Bird Migration Project.

- Over thirty years experience in International Conservation Agencies - organizing, fundraising, coordinating and network building.

- Over 25 years of field research in Natural History, Ecology as well as leading multi-disciplinary research teams.
- Over 15 years experience in Management of Research Units and supervising individual research of M.Sc., and Ph.D's in field ecology.
- Participated in several international Conventions and Congresses such as Bonn Convention; Biodiversity Convention; Ramsar Convention; International Ornithological Congress

International Study Tours & Scholarships

USA - 1982-USFWS/Smithsonian Visiting Scholar

- Smithsonian Institution, Washington
- Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University
- International Crane Foundation, Wisconsin
- Petauxent Wildlife Research Center, W. Virginia
- San Francisco Bay Wildlife Refuge, California
- Welder Wildlife Foundation, Texas
- Arkansas Wildlife Refuge, Texas
- Everglades National Park, Miami, Florida
- New York Zoological Society, New York

U.K. 1982 British Council/ RSPB Visiting Scholar

- Edward Gray Institute of Ornithology, Oxford University
- British Museum (Natural History), Tring
- British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), Tring
- Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Monkswood
- Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge
- BBC Natural History Film Unit, Bristol
- World Conservation Monitoring Center, Cambridge
- Nature Conservancy Council HQ, Peterborough
- Royal Society for Protection of Birds(RSPB) HQ & Reserves

Holland 1985 STRASBOSBEHEER Visiting Scholar

- Dutch Waddensee Research Station, Texel
- Institute of Ecology, Wageningen University

U.K. 1986 ODA/British Council Visiting Scholar

- Promoting Indo-British Technical Cooperation in Environmental Research.
- Institute of Terrestrial Ecology
- British Museum (Natural History)
- British Trust for Ornithology
- Animal Ecology Research Group (AERG) Oxford U.
- World Pheasant Association

Publications

Major Papers:

- Some aspects of the Biology and Ecology of Narcondam Hornbill (*Rhyticeros narcondami*). Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society. 81(1):1984.
- Some notes on the Ecology and status of the Orangerumped Honeyguide (*Indicator xanthonotus*) in the Himalayas (with Salim Ali) JBNHS 80(3) 1984.
- Status of Blacknecked Crane in Ladakh 1983 - Problems and Prospects. JBNHS 82:449-458.
- Coastal Wetlands - Major Ecological Entities for wading Shore birds. pp 200-212., in: The Ecology and Management of Wetlands Vol.1. Eds. J. Hook & others. 1988. Croom Helm. London.
- Wetlands in Asia-Pacific Region: Strategies for mobilising Action for their protection and sustainable use. pp 27-35., in Widening Perspectives on Biodiversity. Eds. Krattiger et.al. 1994. IUCN. Geneva.
- Status and distribution of White-winged Black Tit in Kachch, Gujarat India. Bird Conservation International, 1992 2:115-122.ICBP Cambridge
- Biodiversity of the Western Ghats of Karnataka : Resource Potential & Sustainable Utilisation. Ed. 1999. Biodiversity Initiative Trust, Mangalore
- Kudremukh National Park, Karnataka: A Profile and a Strategy for the Future, JBNHS 100 (2-3): 202-213. Aug- Dec 2003.

(Submitted by Violet Pereira)

Hussain's Giant Night Frog

"A new species of frog in the genus *Nyctibatrachus* (Anura: Ranidae) from Western Ghats, India" *S.V. Krishnamurthy et al in Current Science Vol: 80 Number 7 10 April 2001. pp 887-891.

"*Nyctibatrachus hussaini* – We take pleasure in naming this species after S. A. Hussain, as a modest token of appreciation for his valuable suggestions, guidance and help in the diversity and ecological studies on amphibians of Kudremukh National Park"

*Dr. S.V. Krsihnamurthy, HOD. Dept of Post Graduate Studies and Research in Environmental Science, Kuvempu University, Jnana Sahyadri, Shankaraghatta – 577 451. Karnataka.



S. A. Hussain – a genius' outlook



SAH at Bird Life International-UK



SAH & KP Achar at Salim Ali Centenary Seminar



SAH with Yellappa Reddy in a workshop



SAH in Salim Ali's Birth Day ceremony



SAH's BNHS colleague Usha with Salim Ali



SAH, JC Daniel at W Ghats BD Conference-97



SAH, Madhav Gadgil at 'Bird' book release ceremony



SAH, Madhu Sharma at DK-BD Seminar inauguration



SAH, Vidya, Geetha at B Nature Club inauguration



SAH at SBC Natural Science Assn function



SAH, RK Singh at B Nature Club function



KP Achar presenting a memento to SAH



KP Achar presenting a memento at BD workshop



SAH felicitating KP Achar at Rotary Club



SAH, KPA, Narasimhan at Virajpet



SAH, Bharathesh at Kudremukh NP



SAH, Geetha at Bhagavati Nature Camp-KNP



SAH at Rotary 'Save Anekere Movement'



Salvinia molesta- Students deweeding Anekere



SAH, Suresh Heblikar at 'Save Anekere Movement'



Anekere sacred pond –Kere Basadi view



Anekere in summer with Whistling Ducks



Anekere with water Lilies (after dewatering)



SAH with Cockatoo & Macaw (Parrots)



SAH with Vietnamese Technician in Thailand



S. A. Hussain & his mentor Salim Ali

